

# ***Government That Works!***

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET REVIEW**

***BRIGANTINE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION***

**DONALD T. DiFrancesco**  
*Acting Governor*

**PETER R. LAWRANCE**  
*Acting State Treasurer*

**FEBRUARY, 2001**



## **GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS**

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE**

#### ***The Report of the Brigantine City Board of Education***

New Jerseyans deserve the best government their tax dollars can provide. Efficiency in government and a common sense approach to the way government does business, both at the state and at the local level, are important to Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco. It means taxpayers should get a dollar's worth of service for every dollar they send to government, whether it goes to Trenton, their local town hall or school board. Government on all levels must stop thinking that money is the solution to their problems and start examining how they spend the money they now have. It is time for government to do something different.

Of major concern is the rising cost of local government. There is no doubt that local government costs and the property taxes that pay for them have been rising steadily over the past decade. The Local Government Budget Review (LGBR) program was created in 1994 by former Governor Whitman, marking the first time the state worked as closely with towns to examine what is behind those costs. The Local Government Budget Review (LGBR) program's mission is simple: to help local governments and school boards find savings and efficiencies without compromising the delivery of services to the public.

The LGBR program utilizes an innovative approach combining the expertise of professionals, primarily from the Departments of Treasury, Community Affairs and Education, with team leaders who are experienced local government managers. In effect, it gives local governments a comprehensive management review and consulting service provided by the state at no cost to them. To find those "cost drivers" in local government, teams review all aspects of local government operation, looking for ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

In addition, teams also document those state regulations and mandates which place burdens on local governments without value-added benefits and suggest, on behalf of local officials, which ones should be modified or eliminated. Teams also look for "best practices" and innovative ideas that deserve recognition and that other communities may want to emulate.

Based upon the dramatic success of the program and the number of requests for review services, in July, 1997, the program was expanded, tripling the number of teams in an effort to reach more communities and school districts. The ultimate goal is to provide assistance to local government that results in meaningful property tax relief to the citizens of New Jersey.

## **THE REVIEW PROCESS**

In order for a town, county or school district to participate in the Local Government Budget Review program, a majority of the elected officials must request the help of the review team through a resolution. There is a practical reason for this: to participate, the governing body must agree to make all personnel and records available to the review team, and agree to an open public presentation and discussion of the review team's findings and recommendations.

As part of the review, team members interviewed each elected official, as well as employees, appointees, members of the public, contractors and any other appropriate individuals. The review teams examined current collective bargaining agreements, audit reports, public offering statements, annual financial statements, the municipal code and independent reports and recommendations previously developed for the governmental entities, and other relevant information. The review team physically visits and observes the work procedures and operations throughout the governmental entity to observe employees in the performance of their duties.

In general, the review team received the full cooperation and assistance of all employees and elected officials. That cooperation and assistance was testament to the willingness, on the part of most, to embrace recommendations for change. Those officials and employees who remain skeptical of the need for change or improvement will present a significant challenge for those committed to embracing the recommendations outlined in this report.

Where possible, the potential financial impact of an issue or recommendation is provided in this report. The recommendations do not all have a direct or immediate impact on the budget or the tax rate. In particular, the productivity enhancement values identified in this report do not necessarily reflect actual cash dollars to the municipality, but do represent the cost of the entity's current operations and an opportunity to define the value of improving upon such operations. The estimates have been developed in an effort to provide the entity an indication of the potential magnitude of each issue and the savings, productivity enhancement, or cost to the community. We recognize that all of these recommendations cannot be accomplished immediately and that some of the savings will occur only in the first year. Many of these suggestions will require negotiations through the collective bargaining process. We believe, however, that these estimates are conservative and achievable.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET REVIEW  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
BRIGANTINE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Technology**

The team recommends that the district consider gradually switching to the state cost-per-copy contract, saving \$15,168.

The district could save \$475 by disallowing the use of the direct dialing option when a number is obtained from directory assistance.

The team recommends that the district request an analysis of the usage of all payphones. The district may be able to eliminate the second payphone located near the middle school gym, saving \$591.

**Business Office Operation**

The team recommends that the district terminate its excess workers' compensation policy, saving \$4,911.

**Transportation**

By re-bidding all transportation routes, offering a multi-year contract, the district could save an estimated \$62,000.

**Collective Bargaining Issues**

The team recommends that future contracts be renegotiated to include a 20% employee contribution for other-than-single healthcare coverage, for a potential savings \$58,729.

The team recommends that future private prescription plan and dental plan contracts be renegotiated to include an employee contribution rate of 50%, for a potential savings \$152,804.

By decreasing the maximum yearly benefit for vision care, and/or eliminate the program completely, the district could, potentially, save \$22,255.

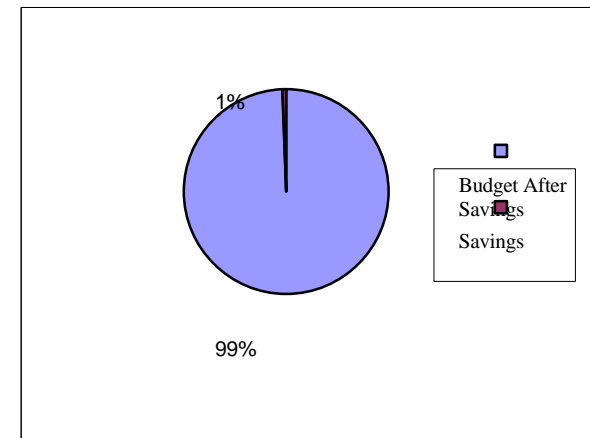
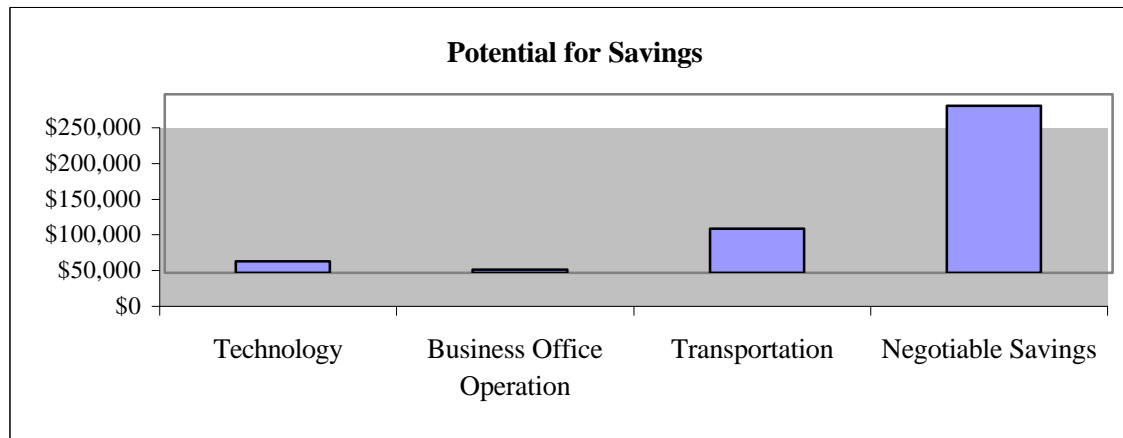
**COMPARISON OF BUDGET APPROPRIATION, STATE AID  
AND LOCAL TAX RATE WITH RECOMMENDED REDUCTIONS IN  
THE BRIGANTINE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

<b><u>Areas Involving Monetary Recommendations</u></b>	<b><u>Annual Savings/ Expense</u></b>	<b><u>*Potential Savings</u></b>	<b><u>Totals</u></b>
<b>Technology</b>			
Switch to state's cost-per-copy contract for photocopiers	\$15,168		
Eliminate direct dialing option when using directory assistance	\$475		
Eliminate second payphone near the middle school gym	\$591		
			<b>\$16,234</b>
<b>Business Office Operation</b>			
Terminate excess workers' compensation policy	\$4,911		
			<b>\$4,911</b>
<b>Transportation</b>			
Re-bid transportation routes offering a multi-year contract	\$62,000		
			<b>\$62,000</b>
<b>Collective Bargaining Issues</b>			
Negotiate a 20% employee contribution for other-than-single coverage		\$58,729	
Negotiate a 50% employee contribution rate for prescription plans		\$102,813	
Negotiate a 50% employee contribution for dental coverage		\$49,991	
Decrease maximum yearly benefit for vision care, and/or eliminate program		\$22,255	
<b>Total Recommended Savings</b>	<b>\$83,145</b>	<b>\$233,788</b>	<b>\$83,145</b>

\*\$233,788 not included in savings of \$83,145.

# **COMPARISON OF BUDGET APPROPRIATION, STATE AID AND LOCAL TAX RATE WITH RECOMMENDED REDUCTIONS IN THE BRIGANTINE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

<u>Areas Involving Monetary Recommendations</u>	<u>Annual Savings/ Expense</u>	<u>*Potential Savings</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Total Amount Raised for School Tax			<b>\$11,398,400</b>
Savings as a % of School Tax			<b>1%</b>
Total Budget			<b>\$14,477,402</b>
Savings as a % of Budget			<b>1%</b>
Total State Aid			<b>\$3,049,832</b>
Savings as a % of State Aid			<b>3%</b>



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## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The City of Brigantine is a 6.43 square mile shore community located on an island directly north of Atlantic City in Atlantic County. The island is accessible only through Atlantic City, via the Brigantine Bridge, and is the only “city-island” in the State of New Jersey. The community lies approximately eighty miles southeast of the state capital of Trenton, sixty-five miles to the east of the City of Philadelphia and one hundred and thirty miles south of New York City. The name "brigantine" is taken from a type of sailing ship that was commonly used in the seventeenth century. The history of the island stretches back several centuries to use by the Native American Lenni Lenape, folklore of pirate landings by the infamous Captain Kidd and several failed attempts to commercialize the island. The community is overwhelmingly residential and has experienced a building/rebuilding renaissance during the 1990's that has left very little land available for development.

Brigantine experienced rapid growth in past decades, with the resident population increasing by 23% during the 1970's, and 37% in the 1980's. Since 1990, however, growth has slowed to slightly more than one percent. In 1998, the United States Bureau of the Census estimated the year-round population at 11,599 with a significant increase of seasonal residents during the summer months. Approximately 90% of the community are White, 3% Afro-American, 4% Hispanic and 2% Asian. The median family income in 1989 was \$45,050 and per capita income was \$18,629. There are many single-family homes in the community, along with a number of condominiums, townhouses and apartments. The labor force is employed in a variety of professional, technical and service-related positions, with many of these tied to the casino industry of Atlantic City.

An elected mayor and council govern the city. They are elected to four-year terms of office and establish local legislation, which, in turn, is carried out by the city's administrator/manager. The local police, fire and public works departments provide municipal services to the community. There is also a very extensive and well subscribed-to recreation program. Atlantic County maintains the Brigantine Branch of the Public Library.

The Brigantine City School District is governed by an appointed board of education. Its seven members serve staggered three-year terms with one individual member serving as President and one as Vice-President, on a yearly basis. The mayor of Brigantine appoints board members to their position as specified under N.J.S.A. 18A:12-7. The school district is comprised of two schools on a single site serving a student population of 1,215 in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth. The district currently sends its high school students in grades nine through twelve to Atlantic City High School. This arrangement has been in place for many years.

The school district, according to the 1998-99 Certified Annual Financial Report (CAFR), employs 159 staff members, which includes 110 certified staff and 49 non-professionals. The New Jersey Department of Education ranks the district in the “DE” category of District Factor Groups (DFG). This is the indicator of the socio-economic status of the citizens of the district. These groupings range from A through J, with the latter being the highest in terms of wealth.



## I. BEST PRACTICES

A very important part of each Local Government Review report is the Best Practices section. During the course of every review, each review team identifies procedures, programs and practices that are noteworthy and deserving of recognition. Best practices are presented to encourage replication in communities and schools throughout the state. By implementing these practices, municipalities and school districts can benefit from the Local Government Budget Review process and, possibly, save considerable expense on their own.

Just as we are not able to identify every area of potential cost savings, the review team cannot site every area of effective effort. The following are those "best practices" recognized by the team for cost and/or delivery effectiveness.

The school district is a very active participant in the Character Counts Program. This activity stems from an earlier program initiated by the Governor, *Developing Character and Values in New Jersey Students*. The elementary and middle schools have immersed themselves in the program. During the 1998-99 school year, Brigantine was named the 4<sup>th</sup> Kindest Place in New Jersey, based upon student accomplishments. In the month of October, the elementary school performed 18,605 acts of kindness. This, along with a repeated strong effort in other months, earned the school district state recognition and an invitation to an award ceremony in the state capital.

School activities emphasize kindness and understanding to everyone. Monthly themes, based on character building qualities, are utilized. Information is sent home to parents in an effort to involve them in the program and to seek their cooperation in reinforcement at home. The staff also infuses the monthly themes in their lesson plans.

The state is once again looking to character education as a means of improving the learning environment in classrooms by raising student respect for themselves and others. Brigantine has an excellent program already in place. The emphasis in the school district on character building, values, and kindness has improved upon an already good school climate. The administration and staff are active participants and role models to the students through their involvement.

The Brigantine Parent Teachers Association (PTA) is a very active, albeit small organization, that has made significant contributions to the school district. In the past, \$30,000 was raised for the purchase of computers. Ongoing activities include a tremendous effort to supplement the district's library budget. The organization runs a yearly book fair where proceeds are taken in kind. This allows the PTA to actually double the amount of library books purchased. In 1998-99, \$6,800 and in 1999-00, \$8,400 was donated. The organization also sponsors cultural arts (\$2,500), awards (\$1,000), the 6<sup>th</sup> grade trip to Stokes State Park (\$1,500), and various staff directed activities. Their budget, excluding the library donation, provides over \$13,000 of supplemental support to the students and staff of the school district.

The district has been very successful in completing some of its capital projects through the use of district personnel. This effort has saved significant time and taxpayer expense. The

administration and board of education have completed most projects with little or no disruption in the educational process through good use of available personnel, timely ordering of materials and thoughtful long-range planning.

A district employee was used to paint many areas of the interior of the middle school. This individual's skill was utilized with impressive results. In most operations, expenditures for this size of an undertaking would have been significantly higher. Another employee was sent to school to be trained to do wiring for technology. This action saved the district money and, probably, a great deal of aggravation by not having to engage an outside vendor.

During the team visit, two classrooms were renovated over a ten-day school break by district personnel and outside contractors. This was facilitated by the timely ordering of materials and having all involved committed to a compact time frame in order to finish the project.

Exterior landscaping (outside the building and an interior courtyard) was accomplished through cooperation with the city, the Brigantine Golf Links and staff and student volunteers. Materials were purchased wholesale and, through the volunteer installation, the projects not only beautified the property, but also saved funds.

The district contracted out food service twelve years ago. The same vendor has provided this service, without interruption. During this period of time, the board has never had to subsidize the operation and there is excellent communication between the vendor and the district. The facility is clean and personnel are well trained, courteous and friendly. There is also a high level of participation, by staff and students, which speaks to the quality of the food and service provided. The vendor makes a serious effort to ensure efficiency and economy while providing the district with positive public relations.

The school district operates in the manner of a true community school. In addition to its unique relationship with the city, the district sponsors many activities during the school year and summer months for its students. Extracurricular sports and clubs are offered during the academic year. Summer programs include activities such as music, drama, arts and crafts, regular and basic skills summer school, special education enrichment, basketball camps and the six-week child care and activity program, Camp Brigantine. The unique location of the district (on an island) and the access problems (to activities) it might impose are never in question with this comprehensive program.

## **II. OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE/FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this section of the review report is to identify opportunities for change and to make recommendations that will result in more efficient operations and financial savings to the school district and its taxpayers.

In its study, the review team found that the district makes a conscious effort to control costs and to explore areas of cost saving efficiencies in its operations. Many of these are identified in the Best Practices section of this report. Others will be noted, as appropriate, in the findings to follow. The district is to be commended for its efforts. The review team did find areas where additional savings could be generated and has made recommendations for change that will result in reduced costs or increased revenue.

Where possible, a dollar value has been assigned to each recommendation to provide a measure of importance or magnitude to illustrate cost savings. The time it will take to implement each recommendation will vary. It is not possible to expect the total projected savings to be achieved in a short period of time. Nevertheless, the total savings and revenue enhancements should be viewed as an attainable goal. The impact will be reflected in the immediate budget, future budgets, and the tax rate(s). Some recommendations may be subject to collective bargaining considerations and, therefore, may not be implemented until the next round of negotiations. The total savings will lead to a reduction in tax rates resulting from improvements in budgeting, cash management, cost control and revenue enhancement.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSES**

LGBR uses various methods to analyze school districts. One method is to compare districts to one another using information from the Department of Education (DOE) and from the Comprehensive Annual Financial Audit. Districts may be compared to appropriate statewide averages or medians. At other times, a comparison is made among districts that are similar in type (K-8), size and socioeconomic characteristics. The most recent comparative data used in this report was compiled in the school year 1998-99, which was the most current available. Other methods used by LGBR include reviewing district documents and identifying benchmarks or related information from various state agencies, state education associations, various publications and private industry.

Comparable districts are drawn from as close a geographical proximity as possible. The school districts that were used for detailed comparison with the Brigantine City School District include Absecon City and Ventnor City in Atlantic County and the Lumberton Township School District in adjacent Burlington County. These school districts were chosen because of their similarity of size and socio-economic characteristics. The following table provides statistical data on the Brigantine City School District and the comparison districts. Brigantine and Ventnor City School District are both Type I districts that have appointed boards of education. Absecon City and Lumberton Township are Type II districts and have elected boards of education. All of the districts are kindergarten through grade eight, with enrollments that range between 950 and

1,307, and have between one and three schools. Other comparisons include teacher/student ratio, students per administrator and faculty per administrator. The Brigantine School District has the second highest number of students per teacher (14.4:1), second highest number of students per administrator (249.1:1) and the highest number of faculty members per administrator at 19.6:1. The median teacher's salary of \$42,373 is the second lowest among the comparison school districts, while the median administrator's salary is the highest.

<b>School District Comparisons Based On General Characteristics</b>				
<b>Description</b>	<b>Brigantine City</b>	<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Township</b>	<b>Ventnor City</b>
County	<b>Atlantic</b>	<b>Atlantic</b>	<b>Burlington</b>	<b>Atlantic</b>
District Type	I	II	II	I
Grades	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-8
District Factor Group	DE	DE	FG	CD
Certified Employees	110	74	123	72
Other Employees	49	39	71	58
Total Employees	159	113	194	130
Square Miles	6.39	5.7	14	2.1
Number of Schools				
Elementary	2	2	3	1
Total	2	2	3	1
Average Daily Enrollment	1,215	950	1,307	1,032
Teacher/Student Ratio				
Elementary	14.4:1	13.2:1	12.9:1	15.3:1
Administrative Personnel 1998-99				
Number of Administrators	5	4	8.3	4.1
Students per Administrator	249:1	240:1	158:1	249.3:1
Faculty per Administrator	19.6:1	19.2:1	13.0:1	17.8:1
Median Salary				
Faculty	\$42,373	\$52,435	\$35,592	\$55,300
Administrators	\$85,782	\$70,281	\$70,136	\$67,950
Median Years of Experience				
Faculty	11	19	7	11
Administrators	22	23	23	18
Instructional Time	5 hrs. 26 min.	5 hrs. 33 min.	5 hrs. 44 min.	5 hrs. 25 min.

Source: 1998-99 CAFR, 1998-99 Report Card and NJDOE Comparative Spending Guide, 2000.

The next step in the comparison of similar districts is to review the revenue information contained in their 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The data indicates

that the districts are similar to one another. The majority of revenue received by Brigantine (over 79%) is derived from local resources. Approximately 17.4% of the district's funding comes from state aid and 2.7% from federal sources.

### Comparison of Revenues

Revenues	Brigantine City		Absecon City		Lumberton Twp.		Ventnor City	
<b>General Fund</b>								
Local Tax Levy	\$9,998,086	70.0%	\$5,274,966	63.2%	\$6,078,209	45.8%	\$7,931,404	75.2%
State Aid	\$1,435,688	10.0%	\$1,074,453	12.9%	\$4,229,177	31.8%	\$833,809	7.9%
Interest on Investment	\$89,172	0.6%	\$63,751	0.8%	\$0	0.0%	\$78,645	0.7%
Tuition	\$9,545	0.1%	\$31,502	0.4%	\$19,555	0.1%	\$0	0.0%
Miscellaneous	\$56,218	0.4%	\$199,057	2.4%	\$282,822	2.1%	\$173,457	1.6%
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<b>\$11,588,709</b>	<b>81.1%</b>	<b>\$6,643,729</b>	<b>79.5%</b>	<b>\$10,609,763</b>	<b>79.9%</b>	<b>\$9,017,315</b>	<b>85.4%</b>
<b>Special Revenue Fund</b>								
State Aid	\$1,062,556	7.4%	\$441,091	5.3%	\$104,312	0.8%	\$1,032,926	9.8%
Federal Aid	\$383,898	2.7%	\$209,097	2.5%	\$226,233	1.7%	\$349,432	3.3%
Other	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$4,561	0.0%
<b>Total Revenue Fund</b>	<b>\$1,446,454</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>\$650,188</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>\$330,545</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>\$1,386,919</b>	<b>13.2%</b>
<b>Debt Service Fund</b>								
Local Tax Levy	\$0	0.0%	\$897,843	10.7%	\$1,059,582	8.0%	\$0	0.0%
State Aid	\$0	0.0%	\$150,409	1.8%	\$1,137,537	8.6%	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total Debt Service Fund</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>\$1,048,252</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>\$2,197,119</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Fiduciary Fund Type*</b>								
Other	\$5,765	0.0%	\$10,565	0.1%	\$145,037	1.1%	\$8,459	0.1%
<b>Total Fiduciary Fund Type</b>	<b>\$5,765</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>\$10,565</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>\$145,037</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>\$8,459</b>	<b>0.1%</b>
<b>Capital Projects</b>								
Other	\$1,245,378	8.7%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$132,989	1.3%
<b>Total Capital Projects</b>	<b>\$1,245,378</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>\$132,989</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
<b>Total Revenues (All Funds)</b>	<b>\$14,286,306</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$8,352,734</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$13,282,464</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$10,545,682</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Brigantine City School District 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

\*No state or federal aid present.

General fund expenditures of the four districts are displayed in the following chart. In each area a dollar figure is given with a percentage of the total expenditure in the column to the immediate right. Instructional costs in all four districts are similar. They range from a high of \$4,521,370 in the Lumberton School District to a low of \$2,670,133 in the Ventnor City Schools. Brigantine also spent a significant amount of their funds in the area of undistributed expenditures. This category includes tuition expenditures for their high school students of just over \$3.2 million. Brigantine's instructional costs in the 1998-99 school year amounted to \$3,886,900, or one-third of total expenditures. Total administrative costs were the second highest of the four districts, yet represented the lowest percentage of expenditures. Additionally, Brigantine spends approximately 23.2% of its budget on support services, or \$2,236 per student. The district also spends a significant amount of its funds (\$578,495) on transportation, which will be addressed in that area of this report.

### Comparison of General Fund Expenditures\*

<b>Actual</b>	<b>Brigantine City</b>		<b>Absecon City</b>		<b>Lumberton Twp.</b>		<b>Ventnor City</b>	
Regular Program - Instruction	\$3,082,340	26.5%	\$2,593,821	40.1%	\$3,273,488	33.2%	\$2,075,289	23.6%
Special Education	\$572,504	4.9%	\$518,224	8.0%	\$992,504	10.1%	\$341,985	3.9%
Basic Skills-Remedial	\$59,605	0.5%	\$107,470	1.7%	\$161,595	1.6%	\$0	0.0%
Bilingual Education	\$106,508	0.9%	\$68,034	1.1%	\$45,799	0.5%	\$220,499	2.5%
Sponsored Co-curricular Activities	\$0	0.0%	\$4,938	0.1%	\$23,710	0.2%	\$18,497	0.2%
Sponsored Athletics	\$21,394	0.2%	\$9,237	0.1%	\$24,274	0.2%	\$12,971	0.1%
Other Instruction Program	\$44,549	0.4%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%
Community Services Program		0.0%	\$209	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$892	0.0%
<b>Total Instructional Cost</b>	<b>\$3,886,900</b>	<b>33.4%</b>	<b>\$3,301,933</b>	<b>51.0%</b>	<b>\$4,521,370</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	<b>\$2,670,133</b>	<b>30.3%</b>
Undistributed Exp. - Ins.	\$3,801,738	32.7%	\$645,275	10.0%	\$408,399	4.1%	\$3,291,358	37.4%
General Administration	\$243,655	2.1%	\$211,607	3.3%	\$288,612	2.9%	\$300,681	3.4%
School Administration	\$308,804	2.7%	\$243,304	3.8%	\$385,334	3.9%	\$201,092	2.3%
<b>Total Administ. Cost</b>	<b>\$552,459</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>\$454,911</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>\$673,946</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>\$501,773</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
Health Service	\$70,927	0.6%	\$63,286	1.0%	\$129,101	1.3%	\$47,686	0.5%
Attendance & Social Work Service	\$34,765	0.3%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$28,944	0.3%
Students Related & Extra Services	\$49,855	0.4%	\$59,699	0.9%	\$241,859	2.4%	\$68,083	0.8%
Other Support Service	\$333,340	2.9%	\$222,951	3.4%	\$490,166	5.0%	\$211,885	2.4%
Other - Imp. of Inst. Service	\$5,953	0.1%	\$4,652	0.1%	\$22,834	0.2%	\$2,719	0.0%
Media Service/School Library	\$138,503	1.2%	\$74,556	1.2%	\$198,368	2.0%	\$103,218	1.2%
Instructional Staff Training Service	\$53,100	0.5%	\$8,028	0.1%	\$28,295	0.3%	\$0	0.0%
Operation of Plant	\$861,725	7.4%	\$441,896	6.8%	\$902,494	9.1%	\$405,490	4.6%
Business & Other Support Services	\$1,169,023	10.0%	\$868,630	13.4%	\$1,266,349	12.8%	\$849,444	9.7%
<b>Total Support Services</b>	<b>\$2,717,191</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>\$1,743,698</b>	<b>26.9%</b>	<b>\$3,279,466</b>	<b>33.2%</b>	<b>\$1,717,469</b>	<b>19.5%</b>
Transportation	\$579,495	5.0%	\$230,371	4.0%	\$611,810	6.2%	\$396,098	4.5%
Capital Outlay	\$95,344	0.8%	\$65,461	1.0%	\$376,899	3.8%	\$225,448	2.6%
Special Schools	\$0	0.0%	\$28,499	0.2%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total General Fund Expenditures</b>	<b>\$11,633,127</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$6,470,148</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$9,871,890</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$8,802,279</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Average Daily Enrollment</b>	<b>1,215</b>		<b>950</b>		<b>1,307</b>		<b>1,032</b>	

Source: School district's 1998-99 CAFR and NJDOE Comparative Spending Guide 2000.

\*Food services in all districts are privatized.

The information in the following comparison was drawn from the New Jersey Department of Education Comparative Spending Guide 2000. The dollar amount represents the actual amount spent in each of the listed categories for the school year 1998-99. In most areas, the per pupil expenditures in Brigantine fall into the upper range in comparison to Absecon City, Lumberton Township and Ventnor City.

<b>Analysis of Similar Districts Using Per Pupil Expenditures or Staffing Data*</b>				
	<b>Brigantine City</b>	<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Twp.</b>	<b>Ventnor City</b>
Total Cost Per Pupil	\$6,622	\$5,901	\$6,603	\$5,375
Total Classroom Instruction	\$4,323	\$4,088	\$3,994	\$3,494
Classroom Salaries & Benefits	\$4,036	\$3,937	\$3,747	\$3,358
Classroom General Supplies & Textbooks	\$239	\$128	\$228	\$141
Classroom Purchased Services & Other	\$47	\$23	\$19	\$0
Total Support Services	\$788	\$528	\$991	\$674
Support Services Salaries & Benefits	\$666	\$481	\$771	\$563
Total Administrative Costs	\$686	\$691	\$757	\$619
Salaries & Benefits for Administration	\$586	\$528	\$630	\$500
Operations & Maintenance of Plant	\$762	\$574	\$821	\$396
Salaries & Benefits for Oper. & Maint. of Plant	\$322	\$262	\$364	\$24
Extracurricular Cost	\$62	\$17	\$42	\$33
Total Equipment	\$154	\$77	\$273	\$248
Student/Teacher Ratio	14.3:1	14:1	14.2:1	15.3:1
Median Teacher Salary	\$42,373	\$52,435	\$35,592	\$55,300
Student/Support Service Ratio	113.2:1	120:1	83:1	173.2:1
Median Support Service Salary	\$48,419	\$45,074	\$40,834	\$57,798
Student/Administrator Ratio	249:1	240:1	158.1:1	249.3:1
Median Administrator Salary	\$85,782	\$70,281	\$68,275	\$67,950
Faculty/Administrator Ratio	19.6:1	19.2:1	13.0:1	17.8:1
Personal Services-Employee Benefits	19.7%	17.5%	17.1%	17.6%

Source: NJDOE Comparative Spending Guide 2000. The total cost per pupil in this table is calculated from those costs included in a district's general fund and special revenue fund budget (early childhood program, demonstrably effective programs, distance learning costs and instructional supplement costs) related to servicing the pupils on role in the district (resident students plus those received from other districts, less those sent out of district) that are considered comparable among school districts. It includes classroom instruction, support services, administration, operation and maintenance of facilities, food services, extra-curricular activities, community and services. The calculation excludes the local contribution to special revenue, tuition expenditures, and interest payments on the lease purchase of buildings, transportation costs and judgments against the school district. Also excluded from this per pupil calculation are equipment purchases, facilities acquisition and construction services, expenditures funded by restricted local, state and federal grants and debt service expenditures.

\*Food service is privatized in all districts.

Beyond the four districts, the Spending Guide also compares districts based upon enrollment grouping and grade configuration. In this case, Brigantine was compared to other kindergarten through eighth grade districts with enrollments of more than 750 students. In addition to the three districts used in the previous comparisons, there are eighty-eight other similar districts in the state, for a total of 92. The information presented shows applicable costs and ranking per category for three years (two years actual and one-year budget). The districts are ranked from low cost to high cost with one (1) being the lowest cost per student and 92 being the highest cost per student.

Comparison Of Brigantine to 92 Districts Ranked from 1 (Low Costs) to 92 (High Costs)						
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-00	
	Actual	Ranking	Actual	Ranking	Budget	Ranking
Cost Per Pupil	\$6,315	31	\$6,315	35	\$6,678	20
Classroom Instruction	\$3,654	17	\$4,323	47	\$4,286	29
Classroom Salaries & Benefits	\$3,361	14	\$4,036	45	\$3,994	24
General Supplies & Textbooks	\$254	81	\$239	70	\$239	62
Classroom Purchased Services & Other	\$38	54	\$47	57	\$53	55
Total Support Services	\$582	10	\$788	27	\$802	19
Support Services Salaries & Benefits	\$487	9	\$666	25	\$677	19
Total Administrative Costs	\$614	8	\$686	15	\$726	13
Salaries & Benefits for Administration	\$501	10	\$586	25	\$579	17
Operations & Maintenance	\$699	41	\$762	51	\$800	48
Salaries & Benefits Operations/Main.	\$260	19	\$322	25	\$329	26
Food Service	\$0		\$0		\$0	
Extracurricular Cost	\$60	71	\$62	68	\$61	57
Median Teacher Salary	\$42,250	25	\$42,373	29	\$42,373	22
Median Support Service Salary	\$46,691	36	\$48,419	45	\$50,022	39
Median Administrator Salary	\$82,562	46	\$85,782	52	\$89,127	60
<b>Ranked High Ratio to Low</b>						
Student/Administrator Ratio	240.8:1	16	249.0:1	16	248.2:1	15
Faculty/Administrator Ratio	18.5:1	17	19.6:1	12	19.5:1	14

Source: NJDOE Comparative Spending Guide March, 2000.

There are eighteen different categories in the comparison. Seventeen are actually used. Food service was not included because an outside vendor provides Brigantine's food service. A ranking above 46 would reflect a higher cost than the midpoint and a ranking of 46 or lower would reflect costs below the midpoint of the 92 districts. Brigantine ranked below the midpoint in eleven of the seventeen categories. In comparison, on the previous chart comparing the four similar districts, Brigantine's total cost per pupil was the highest, and statewide it was ranked 35 of the 92 districts. Similarly, in classroom salaries it was the highest of the comparison districts but below the midpoint statewide. Student/administrator ratio and faculty/administrator ratio, while quite favorable in the statewide rankings (16/92 and 12/92), was also the lowest among the four comparison districts.

## ADMINISTRATION

Board policy directs the establishment and implementation of an organizational plan known as "unit control" for the management of the school district. The superintendent of schools, as the chief administrative officer, is directly responsible to the board of education and directly, or indirectly, supervises every district employee. The performance responsibilities identified include attendance and participation in all meetings of the board, advising the board on policy, as well as, the supervision and enforcement of federal and state laws and board policy. He also has overall responsibility for the educational program, personnel and the operation and maintenance of the physical plant.



The organizational chart of the district indicates that the superintendent, auditor and solicitor report directly to the board of education. The school business administrator serves as the board secretary and reports to the superintendent. He is responsible for all business office operations, buildings and grounds, and the food service program. The district employs two principals, one for the elementary school, grades pre-kindergarten through fourth, and one middle school principal for grades five through eight. There is one supervisor for curriculum and instruction, whose duties also include responsibility for basic skills, special needs and staff development.

In the Comparative Spending Guide, published in March, 2000 by the New Jersey Department of Education, total administrative expenditures relate to four areas of a district's annual budget statement - general administration, school administration, business and other support services (both business and central) and improvement of instruction services. The 1997-98 total administrative cost in Brigantine City was \$614 per pupil, with a ranking of 8 out of 92 districts compared (low spending to high spending). The total administrative cost in 1998-99 was \$686 per pupil, with a ranking of 15 out of 92 K-8 districts with enrollments of 751 or more students.

The figures for total administrative costs for Brigantine and the comparable districts are presented below. All of the districts are low spending, even when compared with each other. In 1998-99, Absecon City was ranked 16 of 92, Lumberton Township was 25 of 92, Ventnor City was 5 of 92 and Brigantine, as stated, was 15 of 92. The average in the state for K-8 districts in this category was \$892 per pupil, which was over \$200 higher than the Brigantine expenditure and \$200 higher than the three district comparison average.

<b>Total Administrative Costs - Selected K-8 Comparable Districts</b>	<b>1997-98</b>		<b>1998-99</b>	
	<b>Actual Cost Per Pupil</b>	<b>% of Total Comparative Cost/Pupil</b>	<b>Actual Cost Per Pupil</b>	<b>% of Total Comparative Cost/Pupil</b>
Absecon City	\$665	12.4%	\$691	11.7%
Lumberton Township	\$581	9.9%	\$757	11.5%
Ventnor City	\$578	11.2%	\$619	11.5%
Three-District Average	\$608	11.2%	\$689	11.6%
Brigantine City	\$614	9.7%	\$686	10.4%

Source: New Jersey Department of Education Comparative Spending Guide, March, 2000.

The team also examined Brigantine's general administrative costs in relation to the three comparison districts. A review was conducted of the Brigantine City, Absecon City, Lumberton Township and Ventnor City's Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA) function 230 - Support Services, General Administration for the year 1998-99. This function includes expenses associated with the board of education and central administration. The review examined the costs identified in the following chart (based upon the June 30, 1999 audit report).

<b>General Administration</b>	<b>Brigantine City</b>	<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Township</b>	<b>Ventnor City</b>
Salaries	\$154,315	\$114,952	\$177,002	\$166,287
Legal Services	\$21,203	\$13,770	\$0	\$21,862
Other Purchased Professional Services	\$17,535	\$23,300	\$5,008	\$9,500
Purchased Technical Services	\$0	\$0	\$13,240	\$2,000
Communications/Telephones	\$34,004	\$21,735	\$33,228	\$23,436
Other Purchased Services	\$6,646	\$15,428	\$21,084	\$12,637
Supplies and Materials	\$4,933	\$4,791	\$26,786	\$1,122
Miscellaneous	\$5,020	\$17,671	\$12,264	\$63,838
Total	\$243,656	\$211,647	\$288,612	\$300,682
Per Pupil (ADE) Costs	\$201	\$223	\$221	\$291

Average Daily Enrollment (1998-99) Brigantine City - 1,215, Absecon City - 950, Lumberton Township - 1,307, Ventnor City - 1,032.

The data indicates that general administrative costs for Brigantine City were \$243,656, as compared with \$211,647 for Absecon City, \$288,612 for Lumberton Township and \$300,682 for Ventnor City. The per pupil cost for Brigantine was \$201, as compared with \$223 in Absecon City, \$221 in Lumberton Borough and \$291 in Ventnor City. In this particular comparison, Brigantine's general administrative per pupil costs were the lowest among the four districts.

Administrative costs and benefits include the full-time and part-time salaries of the superintendent, business manager/board secretary and other general administrators. It also includes principals, the curriculum supervisor and related clerical and secretarial staff. In 1997-98, the per-pupil cost in Brigantine City was \$501 as opposed to an average of \$451 in the comparison districts. Brigantine, however, in comparison with similar districts in the state, ranked 10 of the 92 districts in this category (K-8) and was \$213 below the state average. Similarly in 1998-99, Brigantine spent \$586 per student, as opposed to the \$556 of the three comparison districts, and was \$215 below the state average.

	<b>1997-98</b>		<b>1998-99</b>	
<b>Salaries and Benefits for Administration - Selected K-8 Comparable Districts</b>	<b>Actual per Pupil Cost</b>	<b>% of Total Cost/Pupil</b>	<b>Actual per Pupil Cost</b>	<b>% of Total Cost/Pupil</b>
<b>Absecon City</b>	\$428	8.0%	\$538	9.1%
<b>Lumberton Township</b>	\$472	8.1%	\$630	9.5%
<b>Ventnor City</b>	\$452	8.8%	\$500	9.3%
<b>Three District Average</b>	\$451	8.3%	\$556	9.3%
<b>Brigantine City</b>	\$501	7.9%	\$586	8.8%
<b>State Average</b>	\$714		\$701	

Source: NJDOE Comparative Spending Guide – March, 2000.

In 1998-99, the median administrative salary in the Brigantine City School District was \$85,782 or 19% higher than the comparison districts. Employee benefits in the same year represented 19.7% of salaries as compared to the three-district comparison average of 18.1% in the 92 K-8 operating districts.

<b>CEIFA Line 240 Support Service School Administration</b>				
<b>School Administration</b>	<b>Brigantine City</b>	<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Township</b>	<b>Ventnor City</b>
Salaries of Principal/Assistant Principals	\$180,922	\$138,977	\$219,000	\$136,163
Salaries of Secretarial/Clerical Assistants	\$109,116	\$85,500	\$146,256	\$57,124
Purchased Professional & Technical Serv.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,423
Other Purchased Services	\$7,672	\$12,717	\$3,978	\$2,108
Supplies/Materials	\$8,149	\$2,755	\$12,468	\$2,275
Other Objects	\$2,145	\$3,355	\$3,632	\$0
Total	\$308,004	\$243,304	\$385,334	\$201,093
Per Pupil (ADE) Cost	\$254	\$256	\$295	\$195

As indicated above, Brigantine City's overall expenditures for school administration were similar to the three comparison districts. These costs represent the salaries of principals, and any assistants, in the performance of their building responsibilities. Brigantine's costs were the second lowest of the four districts at \$254 per pupil.

<b>Business and Other Support Services</b>				
	<b>Brigantine City</b>	<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Township</b>	<b>Ventnor City</b>
Salaries	\$149,123	\$95,087	\$157,427	\$85,390
Purchased Prof. Services	\$4,170	\$6,053	\$13,140	\$4,633
Purchased Tech. Services	\$4,410	\$4,539	\$18,033	\$0
Other Purchased Services	\$563	\$3,668	\$2,320	\$15,934
Supplies & Materials	\$6,119	\$4,481	\$2,908	\$14,925
Interest on Lease/Purchase	\$0	\$0	\$13,477	\$0
Miscellaneous	\$0	\$10,950	\$1,505	\$710
Total	\$164,385	\$124,778	\$208,810	\$121,592
Per Pupil Cost	\$135	\$131	\$160	\$118

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

Brigantine's business and other support services costs were \$135 per student or \$1 less than the average of the three comparison districts.

The chart below summarizes, and compares, costs in the areas of general administration, school administration, business and other support services, improvement of instruction and instructional staff training. The review team is aware that instructional staff training is not included in the Comparative Spending Guide calculations for administrative costs. However, this data is included here, since some districts are utilizing this accounting line item for administrators.

	<b>Brigantine City</b>	<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Township</b>	<b>Ventnor City</b>
General Administration	\$243,656	\$211,607	\$288,612	\$300,682
School Administration	\$308,804	\$243,304	\$385,334	\$201,093
Business & Other Support Services	\$164,385	\$125,138	\$208,810	\$120,797
Improvement of Instruction	\$5,953	\$4,653	\$22,834	\$2,719
Instructional Staff Training	\$53,100	\$8,028	\$28,295	\$0
Total	\$775,898	\$592,730	\$933,885	\$625,291
Per Pupil (ADE) Cost	\$639	\$624	\$715	\$606

Average Daily Enrollment (1998-99) for the districts were: Brigantine City – 1,215, Absecon City - 950, Lumberton Township - 1,307, Ventnor City - 1,032.

**The Brigantine City School District is run with appropriate supervisory and administrative staffing. Job descriptions and duties for all personnel are encompassing and up to date. On a comparative basis, the district is frugal in allocating its financial resources for administration.**

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Organizational Structure**

The Brigantine School District has two computer teachers, one in the elementary school and the other in the middle school. They are responsible for the instructional application of computers and other related technology. The superintendent relies upon the computer teachers, the district network specialist and the business administrator in determining the technology plan for the district.

### **Technology Plan**

The district's technology plan includes the district's goals, timeline implementation strategies, staff development policies, and a budgetary spending summary. The district's technology committee is comprised of the two computer teachers, the network/PC specialist, the business administrator and the superintendent. The committee does not meet on a regular basis. However the superintendent does meet regularly, on an informal basis, with each member of the committee to discuss technology issues.

### **Recommendation:**

**The district should attempt to attract individuals from the local business community, especially the nearby casino industry, to serve on the technology committee. This would enable the district to draw upon the expertise and resources of the local business community.**

### **Hardware**

Under the current superintendent, the district began a strong initiative into technology. The district's outdated computer equipment was replaced with modern computers, printers, scanners and related equipment. Currently, the district has one Local Area Network (LAN) comprised of

six servers and approximately 300 PC's. There is a minimum of one multimedia Internet connected computer and an ink jet printer in each classroom. Students also have computer access in the two libraries and in the two computer labs. The district's servers are Windows NT 4.0 based and the PC's are using Windows 95 and 98. By September, 2000, the district expects to convert all of its PC's to Windows 98.

### **Software**

Except for the variations in the PC operating systems, the district's educational and administrative software has been standardized for the 1998-1999 school year. The business office used an accounting software package that allows the office to access information on all line item accounts, check account balances, make adjustments between accounts, cancel purchase orders, issue and cancel checks, perform general ledger entries and create trial balances. In addition, the software allows the business office to update vendor files, perform check reconciliation, encumber funds and post payments to accounts.

Teachers can enter student attendance directly into a database from the PC in their classroom. Using this database, the district's Attendance Officer can generate a report showing student attendance and tardiness. This same software package is used for student course scheduling. Teachers also use the software for student grading. The teacher enters a student's grade into the database. Once the grade is entered, the teachers are locked out from changing the grade. The attendance officer makes all grade changes, with written permission from the school principal.

The district's Internet filtering software is updated every 15 days. The anti-virus software is updated whenever there is a problem.

### **Recommendation:**

**The district should update its anti-virus software on, at least, a monthly basis. The primary purpose of this software is to prevent viruses from damaging a computer system. Although anti-virus software can be updated to remove a virus already in the system, the damage caused by the virus may be irreparable. This could cause the district to incur unnecessary expense to replace the damaged computer, as well as, the potential loss of crucial data.**

### **Internet**

The district has frame relay web access through NJ Access at a cost of \$300 per month.

### **Technical Support**

The district's network/PC specialist is also the Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds (B&G). The technical support staff is comprised of the network/PC specialist and one assistant, who are responsible for basic network maintenance and for all maintenance and repair of the district's PC's. In addition, the district's two computer teachers are very knowledgeable in various hardware and software issues and they assist fellow staff members with hardware and software problems. Most of the district's PC's and related hardware are still under manufacturer's warranty and, upon expiration of the warranties, the network/PC specialist will assume the responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the hardware. The district does not plan on

purchasing any extended warranties or service contracts. However, the district does have a service contract with a local vendor for its LAN. At the present time, the network/PC specialist is pursuing an A+ Certification, with an expected completion date by the end of summer 2000. An individual that is A+ Certified is trained in all aspects of computer hardware and operating systems in order to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to become a computer service technician.

#### **Recommendation:**

**The district's needs would be better served if the network/PC specialist could apply 100% of his time to that position by allowing someone else to handle the maintenance of the physical plant. The district should split the Supervisor of B&G/Network/PC Specialist position into two positions and allow the current holder of that position to become the full time network/PC specialist (a recommendation on this realignment can be found in the custodial/maintenance section).**

#### **Grants**

The Comprehensive Education Improvement and Financing Act of 1996 provides state aid to school districts to establish statewide distance learning networks by the 2001-02 school year. The amount of aid is calculated at \$40 per pupil and is adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). For the 1998-99 school year, the district received \$61,312 in Distance Learning Funds.

Under a federally funded program called the Universal Service Fund (USF), the Education Rate Discount (E-rate) is available to provide discounts on telecommunication services, Internet access and Internet connections for K-12 schools. For the 1998-99 school year, the district received a \$4,500 E-rate grant.

According to the superintendent, the district applied, and was rejected, for a Technology Literacy Challenge Fund Grant (TLCF). The superintendent indicated the reason for the TLCF rejection and the low E-rate grant was due to the fact that the district's grant proposals concentrated more on the hardware aspect of technology, rather than the staffing aspect.

#### **Recommendation:**

**The district should consider hiring a professional grant writer in order to obtain greater success with its grant applications.**

#### **Staff Development**

Through the Educational Technology Training Center (ETTC) located at the Richard Stockton State College, the district's two computer teachers and nine other staff members enrolled in the ETTC Turnkey Trainers Program. The enrollees received extensive technology training in desktop applications to support instructional integration and internet access for classroom instruction. Upon completion of the program, the Turnkey Trainers were each assigned to various Brigantine School District staff members to conduct instruction in software applications.

**Policies**

The district has an Acceptable Use Policy for computers, the Internet and electronic mail that requires the signatures of the parent and student, prior to the student receiving access to the equipment. The policy states what is considered acceptable and unacceptable conduct and use of the district's computers and Internet access.

**Purchasing**

The district has explored many of the available options for purchasing hardware. They have gone out for bid and have used state contracts to purchase technology. The district was unhappy with the quality of hardware that was available under the bid process. The district prefers to purchase name brand hardware that is available under state contract. Except for some basic supplies such as spare keyboards and computer mice, the district does not have a large spare parts inventory, as most of its hardware is still under warranty.

**Awards**

The Atlantic County ETTC Technology in the Classroom 2000 Contest recently awarded the Grand Prize to the middle school computer teacher and the art teacher. In addition, the First Prize in Category 2: Grades 3 to 5, was awarded to the elementary school computer teacher and the art teacher. In a joint effort between the computer and art teachers, each school submitted a multi cultural digital art portfolio designed by the students using PowerPoint software. The project covered all of the core curriculum standards for art. It also covered all the workplace readiness skills for technology and many of the core curriculum standards for reading, social studies and languages.

The same presentation was submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Innovative Programs. The elementary school won a Best Practices Award for the Stars School Program. In addition, the elementary school computer teacher was recently named Teacher of the Year for the Brigantine School District and is a candidate for Atlantic County Teacher of the Year.

**The district is commended for an effective integration of technology into the classroom.**

**Photocopiers**

There are eight photocopiers in the district. The district owns five of the photocopiers, one of which was purchased under state contract. The district leases two photocopiers, with an option on each to buy for \$1 apiece when the lease expires. The remaining copier is a rental with a no purchase option. This copier will be replaced by the start of the 2000-01 school year with a state contract copier. Six of the district's photocopiers have service contracts, which were purchased from the same vendor who leased the two copiers to the district.

The state recently entered into a cost per copy contract, which, in essence, enables entities, including school districts, to contract for the procurement of photocopies, rather than the photocopier equipment. Under this contract, the vendor provides the school district with a copier for its use. The district does not rent, lease or buy the photocopier, but rather purchases the photocopies. All equipment, parts and supplies with the exception of paper and staples are

included in the monthly fee, which varies according to the monthly number of copies. An analysis was performed on the district's photocopiers, comparing the current costs to that of the state contract.

#### **Brigantine City Current District Photocopier Costs**

<b>Make and Model</b>	<b>Monthly Copies</b>	<b>Monthly Cost Lease/Purchase</b>	<b>Monthly Cost of Maint</b>	<b>Total Monthly Cost</b>	<b>Cost per Copy</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Sharp 9800	5,833	Owned	\$110.00	\$110.00	\$0.0189	
Richo 650	13,333	\$550.94	\$132.00	\$682.94	\$0.0512	
Xerox 5028	9,583	Owned	\$41.67	\$41.67	\$0.0043	
Sharp 9800	1,667	Owned	N/A	N/A	N/A	No data
Sharp SD2260	64,583	\$378.33	\$400.00	\$778.33	\$0.0121	
Sharp 9800	7,916	Owned	\$110.00	\$110.00	\$0.0139	
Oce 2600	66,666	\$1,641.67	In Lease	\$1,641.67	\$0.0246	
Sharp SF2035	15,000	58.33	\$196.08	\$254.41	\$0.0170	
<b>Total</b>	<b>184,581</b>	<b>\$2,629.27</b>	<b>\$989.75</b>	<b>\$3,619.02</b>	<b>\$0.0196</b>	

#### **State Contract Costs**

<b>Make and Model</b>	<b>Monthly Copies</b>	<b>Monthly Min. Copies</b>	<b>Monthly Min. Cost</b>	<b>Difference Actual/Min</b>	<b>Total Monthly Cost</b>	<b>Total Cost Per Copy</b>
Sharp 9800	5,833	3,500	\$50.75	2,333	\$84.58	\$0.0145
Richo 650	13,333	12,000	\$138.00	1,333	\$153.33	\$0.0115
Xerox 5028	9,583	7,500	\$96.00	2,083	\$122.66	\$0.0128
Sharp 9800	1,667	1,000	\$24.40	667	\$40.67	\$0.0244
Sharp SD2260	64,583	60,000	\$768.00	4,583	\$826.66	\$0.0133
Sharp 9800	7,916	7,500	\$96.00	416	\$101.32	\$0.0128
Oce 2600	66,666	60,000	\$768.00	6,666	\$853.32	\$0.0133
Sharp SF2035	15,000	12,000	\$138.00	3,000	\$172.50	\$0.0115
<b>Total</b>	<b>184,581</b>	<b>163,500</b>	<b>\$2,079.15</b>	<b>21,081</b>	<b>\$2,355.04</b>	<b>\$0.0128</b>

The district has purchased one photocopier using another state contract, and is currently paying approximately \$683 per month for the financing of the photocopier and the maintenance. By using the state photocopy procurement contract, that same photocopier would have cost the district \$153 per month, a savings of \$530 per month. Overall, by using the state contract for the procurement of photocopies instead of leasing or purchasing photocopiers the district would save a total of \$1,264 monthly versus what it is currently paying. However, the district would incur substantial financial penalties by prematurely ending its current lease agreements.

The district currently leases a photocopier located in the elementary school teachers' workroom for \$1,642 per month. According to the manufacturer specifications this copier has a recommended monthly copying volume of 1,000,000. The district is currently making only 66,666 copies per month on this machine. This machine is underutilized. A photocopier using 66,666 copies per month would only cost the district \$853 a month under the state photocopy procurement contract.



**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the district consider gradually switching to the state contract as its owned photocopiers age and need replacement and when the district's current photocopier leases expire.

**Cost Savings: \$15,168**

The district should review meter readings for all its photocopiers and determine if they are paying for more photocopier capacity than they need.

**Communications/Telephone**

The Brigantine City School District expended \$34,004 for communication/telephones in the 1998-99 school year, a decrease of 2.48% from the previous school year. A review of the telephone bills during this period indicates that toll call charges are kept to a minimum. The district does not have a written policy for long distance personal calls. The staff voluntarily reimburses the district for any long distance personal charges. The business office staff reviews the monthly bills for correctness and any unusual calling activity. A further review of the telephone bills for 1998-99 revealed there were 1,390 calls made to directory assistance during the school year at a total cost of \$496.45. Several of those calls were made using the direct dial feature, which enables the directory assistance caller to have their call placed for a nominal fee without any additional dialing.

**Directory Assistance Telephone Charges 1998-99**

	<b>(609) 266-7671</b>		<b>(609) 266-1054</b>	
	<b><u># D.A. Calls</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>	<b><u># D.A. Calls</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>
Jul-98	72	\$25.20	0	\$0.00
Aug-98	49	\$17.15	1	\$0.35
Sep-98	129	\$45.75	4	\$1.40
Oct-98	142	\$50.30	0	\$0.00
Nov-98	120	\$43.50	0	\$0.00
Dec-98	124	\$44.60	0	\$0.00
Jan-99	108	\$38.40	0	\$0.00
Feb-99	103	\$37.85	1	\$0.35
Mar-99	150	\$54.00	1	\$0.35
Apr-99	115	\$41.50	2	\$0.70
May-99	126	\$44.40	2	\$0.70
Jun-99	139	\$49.25	2	\$0.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>1377</b>	<b>\$491.90</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>\$4.55</b>

**Recommendation:**

The district should encourage the use of telephone directories in order to obtain a telephone number and disallow the use of the direct dialing option when a number is obtained from directory assistance.

**Cost Savings: \$475**

The district has four payphones on the premises. These phones are contracted through Bell Atlantic, at a cost of \$49.25 per phone, per month. The district does not share in any of the revenue generated by these payphones. During the entire time the review team was in the district, one of the payphones was out of order.

**Recommendation:**

**The district should periodically inspect the payphones to ensure they are in operating condition. If a payphone is found to be out of order, the district should contact the telephone company and request that the payphone be repaired. In addition, the district should request an analysis of the usage of all four payphones. The district may be able to eliminate the second payphone located near the middle school gym.**

**Cost Savings: \$591**

### INSTRUCTION

The Brigantine City School District has a Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction who has primary responsibility for curriculum development and implementation of the core curriculum standards of the New Jersey Department of Education. The Supervisor of Curriculum reports directly to the Superintendent of Schools. The district has a detailed five-year curriculum plan that reflects five stages of development in the various curriculum areas through the 2003-04 school years. The various stages in the district curriculum plan are assessment/analysis, writing concepts and curriculum, implementation, evaluation and reflection, revision and recommendations for change. There are staff curriculum libraries located in both the elementary school and the middle school.

According to the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) publication, Basic Statistical Data, Brigantine teachers' salary costs per pupil in 1998-99 were \$3,370, which was 2.9% below the Atlantic County average and 16% below the state average of \$4,010. Salary costs in the comparison districts are contained in the following chart:

<b>Teacher Salary Costs per Pupil</b>	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1998-99</b>
Brigantine City	\$3,299	\$3,370
Absecon City	\$3,152	\$3,349
Lumberton Township	\$3,034	\$3,200
Ventnor City	\$2,808	\$2,890
Atlantic County	\$3,415	\$3,470
New Jersey	\$3,907	\$4,010

Source: NJEA Research Basic Statistical Data-Bulletin A99-1-March, 2000

In the 1998-99 school year, the average teacher's salary in the Brigantine School District was \$45,274. This was the second lowest in the four district comparison. When compared with all school districts in Atlantic County, Brigantine's average salary was 2.3% lower. A comparison

on the state level indicates that salaries in the Brigantine City School District are 12% lower on average and the median salary is 16% lower. The table below indicates the average and median salaries in the four comparative districts, Atlantic County and the State of New Jersey.

<b>Teacher Salary Comparison 1998-99</b>		
	<b>Average Salary</b>	<b>Median Salary</b>
Brigantine City	\$45,274	\$42,750
Absecon City	\$45,496	\$52,250
Lumberton Township	\$40,583	\$36,252
Ventnor City	\$46,787	\$55,250
Atlantic County	\$46,359	\$43,750
New Jersey	\$51,456	\$51,250

Source: NJEA Research Teacher Salaries and Salary Guides September, 1999-Bulletin A98-3/4/6.

Instructional materials, costs per pupil, which include all expenditures for classroom supplies and textbooks for all instructional programs, were \$239 in 1998-99, or 16% above the state average of \$206. The instructional materials costs in the comparison districts are presented below:

<b>Instructional Materials Costs per Pupil</b>	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1998-99</b>
Brigantine City	\$254	\$239
Absecon City	\$147	\$128
Lumberton Township	\$193	\$228
Ventnor City	\$133	\$141
New Jersey State Average	\$198	\$206

Source: NJEA Research Basic Statistical Data-A99-1 March, 2000.

### **Brigantine Elementary School**

The Brigantine Elementary School, which was constructed in 1995, is a modern and attractive two-story building. The facility is located on the north end of the island and is connected to the middle school via a hallway. The school currently houses 725 students in grades kindergarten through four, self-contained special education, and one class for pre-school handicapped (one a.m. session and one p.m. session). The school was built with room for anticipated growth. However most instructional areas are now utilized. The district has contracted with an outside vendor for a facilities study (to include enrollment projections), which they expect to be completed by the end of the year.

The facility is large, yet projects an atmosphere that the staff, parents and visitors perceive as warm and friendly. The hallways are wide and bright with a great deal of natural light. Many of the classrooms have a view of/or overlook the two interior courtyards. Classrooms are assigned by grade level to particular areas of the building. Kindergarten and grade 1 are located on the first level and grades 2-4 on the second. Accommodations are available for small groups in need of special education services, basic skills or ESL assistance, on both floors. The school has a large multipurpose room, cafetorium, science room, art room, music room and a computer room. The media center is a bright, attractive facility with a high, domed ceiling. Class sizes were reasonable and consistent with the levels recommended in the Comprehensive Plan for

Educational Improvement and Financing issued by the DOE. Class size in grade four was less than what CEIFA recommends but elimination of a class would increase class size over the recommended level. Grade level and size of classes are as follows:

<b>Brigantine Elementary School</b>		
<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Number of Classes</b>	<b>Average Class Size</b>
Kindergarten	6	23
Grade 1	6	20.5
Grade 2	6	23
Grade 3	6	22
Grade 4	6	21
Pre-School Handicapped	1 a.m.	5
Pre-School Handicapped	1 p.m.	9
Special Education	3	10

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in the school is very active. They conduct numerous fundraising activities in support of the educational programs of the school. The school has been a very active participant in the “Kindness is Contagious Program” and has received recognition from the state as the “Kindest School in New Jersey.” The “Heart of Gold Award” was presented to the students for their many acts of kindness to each other and to members of the community. The school is, also, most proud of its plan (objective) to have third grade students prepare a personal art Power Point presentation. The students have to make an oral presentation of their projects that will be scored using a rubric that correlates to the ESPA Speaking Rubric.

Weekly grade level meetings facilitate coordination of curriculum and school activities. The staff members volunteer to serve on numerous curriculum committees. In addition to the core subjects, the school offers students the opportunity to participate in an enhanced music program. This program, which is taught by an exceptional facility, includes instruction on string instruments. The school is also proud of its technology program and the instruction students receive both in the regular classroom and in the laboratory. There is also a before and after school self-sustaining latchkey program available in the community.

### **North Middle School**

The Brigantine North Middle School sits on the same site as the elementary school. This location provides the district with optimal use of staff and facilities. The original building was constructed in 1960 and has undergone four additions since then. The building also houses the board office, central administration and the Recreation Department of the City of Brigantine. There are forty classrooms, which are allocated for use for regular education, special education, art, music, family living, computer instruction, industrial technology, basic skills and bilingual. In addition there is a cafetorium, library, and gymnasium with adjacent locker rooms and a large auditorium. Students follow an eight period schedule. The class periods are 40 minutes in length and students are allowed three minutes for class passing. The student lunch period is 25 minutes long and is held during 6<sup>th</sup> period for all grade levels. All students must take the core subjects and, in addition, they have the opportunity to take a number of elective subjects. These include computer instruction, music, art, band, industrial technology, physical education, library

skills, algebra and independent living. Class size on the middle level was also within the parameters set in the Comprehensive Plan, with minimal variance. The 1999-00 sectioning and class sizes are as follows:

<b>Brigantine North Middle School Academic and Special Education Classes</b>		
<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Number of Classes</b>	<b>Average Class Size</b>
Grade 5	6	22
Grade 6	6	22
Grade 7	5	23
Grade 8	5	23
Special Education	2	9

During the last five years, the district has embarked on an extensive renovation program in order to upgrade the physical plant of the middle school. These upgrades have been well planned and have caused little interruption to the educational program. Windows, doors, flooring and the roof have been replaced. The media center and cafetorium have been upgraded and attractively painted. Landscaping of the outside grounds and interior courtyard has been completed at minimal expense through wholesale purchasing, installation by district and city employees and the use of volunteers.

The school, with a current enrollment of 520 is almost at maximum. The district is faced with increased enrollment moving through the elementary grades and the need to provide additional space for early childhood education. A course of action will be considered when the district receives the facilities study and long range enrollment projections from the independent contractor.

### **Special Education**

Brigantine special education students are distributed throughout the school district in five self-contained classrooms that accommodate multiply handicapped students. The school district has less restrictive alternatives as well, such as supported regular education, and six resource rooms (in-class and pullout centers) for a continuum of services. The elementary school is providing more inclusive education and has moved to return students from out-of-district placements. As a result, the Brigantine City School District has initiated a preschool disabled program with two self-contained classrooms and established three multiple-handicapped classes.

There is currently one Child Study Team (CST) for the district, composed of one psychologist, one learning disabilities teacher-consultant, and one social worker. The principal of the middle school serves as the director, as well as supervisor over student placements. Two speech therapists and a secretary complement the CST. Additional staff include 10 certificated special education teachers, five instructional aides, one part-time Title I teacher and one part-time speech teacher. (The part-time teachers are shared with a non-public school located in Brigantine City.) These staff members report to the Supervisor of Curriculum/Instruction. Included in the regular functions of the CST were the determination of special education eligibility, reevaluations, developing and monitoring individualized educational programs, conducting placement conferences and consultation, testing and other related activities or services.

The district has a relatively stable classification rate, which is the third lowest among the comparable school districts as indicated below:

<b>Special Education Classification</b>								
	<b>1991-92</b>	<b>1992-93</b>	<b>1993-94</b>	<b>1994-95</b>	<b>1995-96</b>	<b>1996-97</b>	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1998-99</b>
<b>Brigantine City</b>								
Total Enrollment	1,078.5	1,154.5	1,226.0	1,286.0	1,338.0	1,448.0	1,511.0	1,538.0
Special Education Enrollment	124	145	150	153	132	143	156	160
Classification Rate	11.5%	12.6%	12.2%	11.9%	9.9%	9.9%	10.3%	10.4%
<b>Absecon City</b>								
Total Enrollment	840.5	889.5	905.5	934.5	956	1,036	1,023	1,009
Special Education Enrollment	119	142	153	158	176	163	155	154
Classification Rate	14.2%	16.0%	16.9%	16.9%	18.4%	15.7%	15.2%	15.3%
<b>Lumberton Township</b>								
Total Enrollment	706	795	879	961	1,011	1,150	1,244	1,335
Special Education Enrollment	89	99	127	132	141	158	180	211
Classification Rate	12.6%	12.5%	14.4%	13.7%	13.9%	13.7%	14.5%	15.8%
<b>Ventnor City</b>								
Total Enrollment	1,027.5	1,037.5	1,100.5	1,103.5	1,163	1,231	1,262	1,322
Special Education Enrollment	90	106	85	97	97	97	98	103
Classification Rate	8.8%	10.2%	7.7%	8.8%	8.3%	7.9%	7.8%	7.8%

Of the 197 students classified by the CST, 49 students are educated in self-contained classes, 55 in resource rooms, and 5 students are mainstreamed. The Application for State Aid (ASSA) lists the remaining 41 students in the following categories: 16 students are sent to the Atlantic County Special Services School District (ACSSSD), 24 students are sent to Atlantic City High School and one student attends a private school. There are 47 additional students who have been classified by a speech therapist and receive speech instruction within the district.

The Brigantine School District special education expenditures for 1998-99 have declined by over \$89,000 from the previous year. This is attributable to the array of programs now available within district. It would have been a greater saving except for contractual salary increases and increases in tuition paid to other educational institutions.

<b>Brigantine City</b>			
<b>Special Education</b>			
	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1998-99</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Neurologically Impaired</b>	<b>\$86,308</b>	<b>\$0</b>	
Salaries of Teachers	\$71,726	\$0	
Other Salaries for Instruction	\$14,274	\$0	
General Supplies	\$308	\$0	
<b>Visually Handicapped</b>	<b>\$2,760</b>	<b>\$2,850</b>	3%
Purchased Professional/Educational Services	\$2,760	\$2,850	3%
<b>Multiple-Handicapped</b>	<b>\$121,750</b>	<b>\$242,432</b>	99%
Salaries of Teachers	\$85,537	\$175,258	105%
Other Salaries for Instruction	\$31,297	\$57,860	85%
General Supplies	\$3,028	\$6,526	116%
Textbooks	\$1,889	\$2,788	48%
<b>Resource Room</b>	<b>\$290,929</b>	<b>\$282,860</b>	-3%
Salaries of Teachers	\$263,524	\$250,706	-5%
Other Salaries for Instruction	\$17,063	\$17,020	0%
General Supplies	\$8,787	\$12,299	40%
Textbooks	\$1,556	\$2,834	82%
<b>Pre-School Handicapped</b>	<b>\$43,346</b>	<b>\$44,363</b>	2%
Salaries of Teachers	\$36,648	\$43,436	19%
Other Salaries for Instruction	\$6,379	\$0	
General Supplies	\$320	\$927	190%
<b>Speech Instruction</b>	<b>\$49,154</b>	<b>\$0</b>	
Salaries of Teachers	\$45,386	\$0	
General Supplies	\$3,768	\$0	
<b>Undistributed Expenditures - Instruction</b>	<b>\$877,196</b>	<b>\$814,853</b>	-7%
Tuition to Other LEAs within State - Special	\$350,000	\$250,000	-29%
Tuition to CSSD and Regional Day School	\$486,354	\$354,925	-27%
Tuition to Private School for HDCP (in State)	\$2,400	\$3,246	35%
Tuition to State Facilities	\$38,442	\$206,682	438%
<b>Other Support Services - Special Services</b>	<b>\$215,073</b>	<b>\$241,623</b>	12%
Salaries of Other Professional Staff	\$144,692	\$149,584	3%
Salaries of Secretarial and Clerical Assistants	\$12,140	\$10,684	-12%
Purchased Professional/Educational Services	\$0	\$63,546	
Purchased Professional/Technical Services	\$41,021	\$1,390	-97%
Other Purchased Services	\$1,238	\$0	
Miscellaneous Purchased Services	\$394	\$374	-5%
Supplies and Materials	\$15,589	\$16,044	3%
<b>Special Education Transportation</b>	<b>\$154,529</b>	<b>\$122,903</b>	-20%
Special Education Students - Joint Agreements	\$154,529	\$122,903	-20%
<b>Total Special Education Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,841,045</b>	<b>\$1,751,884</b>	-5%

In addition to the newly established classrooms and special education services, the district has undertaken some unique programs to further enhance social and home skills. These include:

Real Game in which students choose a career that appeals to them. Students learn about the skills involved, keep a journal, budget, and plan a future life.

Independent Family Living involves students in the planning of a lifestyle. Real world skills are developed as students progress in the class.

The New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the Special Education Regulations, N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.1 et. seq. on June 3, 1998, effective July 6, 1998. As part of the regulations, districts may have reductions in the number of re-evaluations they will be required to perform. Over a three-year period, the Brigantine Special Services Department received 165 referrals, classified 115 students and performed 94 re-evaluations. Potential savings should be realized in future school years, provided there is not a large increase in the number of classified students to be served.

**The district is to be commended for taking measures to return out-of-district placements by developing programs in the district. LGBR supports educating resident students in appropriate programs in the least restrictive environment, in accordance with the student's Individual Educational Plans (IEP), preferably, within home school districts.**

### **Basic Skills**

For the 1998-99 school year, the Brigantine School District had 328 students receiving basic skills instruction in grades kindergarten through 8. This is 27% of the total student population. These include some students in the English-as-a Second Language Program and those associated with the child study team.

Eligibility for the Basic Skills Improvement Program (BSIP) is determined based upon standardized tests, i.e., the IOWA Test of Basic Skills and The Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) administered in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and the State of New Jersey Early Warning Test (EWT) given in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Teacher recommendations are also used for placement into the program. When selecting students to participate in the program, rather than consider just the one test score, the teachers look at past scores and the students' entire profile in making the determination.

The Elementary School Proficiency Assessment is the state test for fourth grade students. The ESPA was designed to give educators information about 4<sup>th</sup> grade achievement in the areas required by New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. The following content areas are being tested: language arts literacy, mathematics, science, and visual and performing arts.

The New Jersey Grade 8 Early Warning Test is used as a primary indicator for identifying students who may require instructional intervention in the areas of reading, mathematics and writing. Scoring is distributed among three levels, the highest being level I, which indicates clear competence to level III, which is considered below the state minimum of proficiency.

At the elementary level, the program is conducted on a "pull-out" basis, with some inclusion as necessary. Reading instruction is provided in grades one through three, and math instruction in grades two through four. Total daily target time is 40 minutes. At the middle school level the



program is strictly inclusion in various subject areas. Fifth through eighth grade students receive 42 minutes of daily contact time, in addition to small group instruction when necessary.

**The district is to be commended for participating in a scholarship program awarded by the New Jersey Association of Federal Program Administrators. The scholarship was established for remedial students who were enrolled in BSIP and eventually excelled in high school academics. Nominations are sought for presentation at their annual spring conference.**

The chart below details the basic skills program for Brigantine and the comparable school districts of Absecon City and Lumberton Township. The 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFRA) for Ventnor City does not have a line item for basic skills. The comparable school district average is thus a two-district average.

<b>Brigantine Board of Education and Comparable School Districts</b>					
<b>Basic Skills/Remedial – Instruction 1998-99</b>					
	<b>Brigantine City</b>		<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Twp.</b>	<b>Two District Average*</b>
		<b>% Total Operating</b>			
<b>Basic Skills/Remedial – Instruction</b>		<b>Expense</b>			
Salaries of Teachers	\$59,606	100%	\$107,077	\$119,477	\$113,277
Other Salaries for Instruction	0	0%	0	\$30,156	\$15,078
General Supplies	0	0%	0	\$11,077	\$5,539
Textbooks	0	0%	\$393	\$885	\$639
<b>Total Basic Skills</b>	<b>\$59,606</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$107,470</b>	<b>\$161,595</b>	<b>\$134,533</b>
Total # Students	1,215		950	1,307	1,129
Total Cost Per Pupil	\$49.06		\$113.13	\$123.64	\$119.16

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

\*The Ventnor City School District does not have a line item for Basic Skills Instruction.

The actual 1998-99 expenditure for the basic skills program was \$238,202. The district, through funding received from Demonstrably Effective Program Aid (DEPA), was able to direct \$178,596 toward the payment of salaries. DEPA is provided for the purpose of providing instructional, school governance and health and social service programs to pupils in the receiving schools. Aid is provided for schools with a concentration of low-income pupils equal to or greater than twenty percent.

The total cost per pupil for basic skills in Brigantine was thus \$196.05 per pupil. It should be noted that the high level of remedial instruction is in part due to the mobility of the population of Brigantine. The district's decision to offer extensive compensatory educational services to students is a judgment by local officials about the needs of the student population.

### **Recommendation:**

**While the review team concurs with the importance of basic skills, the expenditures for this instruction should be examined on a regular basis, and monitored for efficiency and cost savings. If the low-income student population were to fall below the 20% cut off mark, the district would no longer qualify for DEPA funds and would, therefore, have to absorb the total cost of the program.**

### **Bilingual/English-as-a-Second Language**

The district operates an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program, which is one of several programs, operated under the auspices of the New Jersey Department of Education's (DOE) Bilingual Program. An ESL program is required when districts have 10 or more students who speak languages other than English (N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.4c). Related programs operate under the auspices of DOE include the Bilingual Program, which is required when a district has more than 20 students in any one language classification (N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.4d).

In 1998-99, the district ESL program had 104 students. The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report indicates a salary line of \$96,169, which was supplemented by \$34,169 from DEPA, for a total of \$130,318. The latter funding is allocated for the purpose of providing instructional, school governance and health and social service programs to eligible schools. Aid is provided for schools with a concentration of low-income pupils, equal to, or greater than, 20%. Another \$6,294 was spent on supplies, and \$4,045 on textbooks.

Using the revised salary line item, the total cost per student for Bilingual/ESL Education is \$115.77 rather than \$87.66. Brigantine's cost, when compared to the other districts, was above those incurred by Absecon City but below those of Lumberton Township.

<b>Brigantine Board of Education and Comparable School Districts</b>					
<b>Bilingual/ESL Education 1998-99</b>					
	<b>Brigantine City</b>		<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Twp.</b>	<b>Two District Average*</b>
		<b>% Total Operating</b>			
<b>Bilingual/ESL Education</b>		<b>Expense</b>			
Salaries of Teachers	\$96,169	90%	\$67,721	\$119,477	\$93,599
Other Salaries for Instruction	0	0%	\$0	\$30,156	\$15,078
General Supplies	6,294	6%	\$313	\$11,077	\$5,695
Textbooks	4,045	4%	\$0	\$885	\$443
<b>Total Bilingual/ESL Education</b>	<b>\$106,508</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$68,034</b>	<b>\$161,595</b>	<b>\$114,815</b>
Total # Students	1,215		950	1,307	1,129
Total Cost Per Pupil	\$87.66		\$71.61	\$123.64	\$101.70

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

\*The Ventnor City School District does not have a line item for Bilingual/ESL education.

The ESL staff was well trained, experienced and provided an effective program. The district provides a multitude of services for the Limited English Proficient Students including an introductory computer course, homework techniques class for parents, bilingual evaluations for child study team assessments, a tutoring program, a mentoring program between elementary and middle school students and a bilingual aide for classified students.

**The team concludes that the program costs are reasonable and that it meets the varying needs of students with limited English proficiency.**

### **Gifted and Talented**

Brigantine recognizes the need to support students capable of high performance and to provide these students with educational programs and, when necessary, differentiated facilities in which

to fully develop. The students are termed “exceptionally able” and are identified through standardized tests, teacher recommendation, teacher evaluation, grades and parent input.

One teacher provides services to students in grades one through eight. The students in grades one through four receive a total enrichment program. The school year is divided in half so students in grades three and four are taught from September to January and students in grades one and two are serviced from February to June. They meet on a rotating basis, approximately every other week, for a class period.

Students in grades 5 through 8 are selected by standardized test results, teacher recommendation, and grades. Students in grades 5 through 7 meet twice a week for 80 minutes. Eighth grade students meet seven times a week for a total of 280 minutes.

Elementary students receive a theme-based curriculum. First grade students study the world of dinosaurs. Second grade students experience classic children’s literature through the books developed by the Junior Great Books Foundation of Chicago. Third and fourth graders receive a thematic approach which cover general and social sciences. These classes are not graded.

Students in grades 5 through 8 receive a thematic approach as well. These students also participate in gifted programs, such as, the Mini-Model Congress and Invention Contest (SITE). The 7<sup>th</sup> grade students participate in the Junior Great Books Series, which infuses interpretative style thinking and questioning techniques. Students also participate in a Civics Youth Week, where students learn about local government through a hands-on approach. Eighth grade students receive an enriched language arts course. This course consists of the study of the classic novel, Poe and Shakespeare. The Gifted/Enrichment Program also sponsors and coordinates the Holocaust Contest by Stockton State College in grades 4 through 8.

The Gifted/Enrichment Program of Brigantine has offered specialized programs for the middle school population since 1998. These include:

Cognetics teaches the creative problem solving process through fact finding, problem analysis, idea gathering and solution selection. Students work in teams on a selected problem. They research all aspects of the problem, which covers the arts, communications, social sciences, and applied and pure sciences. The results are presented at expositions. The students are given awards for their efforts.

The Resources Offered in Gifted and Talented Education (ROGATE) program offers the students a chance to explore academic topics while strengthening their capacity to perform and present valid research. These students complete original research based on a hypothesis about one aspect of their topic. Students select an appropriate research method, which may include a philosophical, historical, descriptive or experimental approach.

The district belongs to the Southern New Jersey Consortium for Gifted and Talented Children which offers students the opportunity to take advanced courses with students of similar abilities. The curriculum is designed to focus on developing more complex thinking such as analysis,

creativity, evaluation, and presenting subject matter earlier and in a different manner. This Consortium sponsors an annual Tournament of Heterogeneous Intellectual Niches of Knowledge (THINK) for participating schools.

**The district is to be commended for striving to meet the needs of these special students and for providing the structure for academically gifted students to excel.**

### **Guidance**

Counseling services are available to all grade levels in the Brigantine School District. The primary objectives of the program are to assist children in becoming better-adjusted to school, community and home; and provide vocational, educational, and personal information so that students can make appropriate decisions about the future. These objectives are achieved through individual and small group counseling (problem oriented), career counseling, course selection and scheduling, and interaction with parents, as needed. The counselors also assist with testing in the school district.

The guidance office is impacted by the high rate of transience, characteristic of the Brigantine community. Mobility in the district was over 27% at one time. In the 1998-99 school year, it had declined to 19.6% in the middle school and 18.1% in the elementary school. As a result, the counselors are constantly involved with new student intake, determining placement, and parent interviews.

In the elementary school (K-4), there is one counselor who reports directly to the school principal. The counselor also functions as disciplinarian and teaches a class on life skills. Although there is no direct instruction on the part of the counselor, there is in class presentations on such topics as drugs and alcohol.

The middle school (5-8) has one counselor who reports to the principal and, also, functions as the chairperson of the child study team. The counselor is responsible for high school placement of eighth grade students, including selection of courses and interpretation of standardized test results. Approximately 75-80% of Brigantine 8<sup>th</sup> grade students attend Atlantic City High School. The counseling staff of the high school provides Brigantine with support during the scheduling and orientation process.

The recommendations contained in the Department of Education's Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing (May, 1996) indicate staffing levels of 1:500 at the elementary school and 1:337 at the middle school level. These ratios are below the actual student enrollment numbers of 725 in the elementary school and 520 students at the middle school.

In order to compensate for these staffing ratios, the district has instituted a number of programs:

Peer Mediation Program is a mediation service offered by the Community Justice Institute. It involves a cooperative effort between Atlantic County Government, Stockton State College, Atlantic County Bar Association, and the New Jersey Department of Human Services. The mediation program teaches new, effective ways to deal with potentially explosive situations.

Students help other students by using mediation approaches to problem solving. The program empowers students, lowers demand on faculty/administrative time, and settles small conflicts before they escalate.

The Health Educator at Brigantine Middle School coordinates the Peer Leadership Program called “Teens Lending a Helping Hand.” It is a ten-week course covering topics such as self-esteem, decision-making, anger management and communication skills. Training is provided to groups of 12 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students through the Atlantic City Medical Center. The students selected for this course represent a cross section of students with the intent of developing leadership skills and providing a positive influence on other students.

Banana Splits is a discussion group, facilitated by a teacher, for students from broken homes. It meets on a periodic basis and has been instrumental in helping students to express their feelings and seek assistance in dealing with issues related to divorce.

The chart below profiles the Guidance function at Brigantine and the comparable school districts. The salary line item for the Brigantine School District represents the salary of the middle school counselor. If the elementary school counselor’s salary is added, the total salary line is \$107,515, which translates into a total guidance cost per pupil of \$88.49. This number is still lower than those for the comparable school districts of Absecon City and Lumberton Township.

<b>Brigantine City Board of Education and Comparable School Districts</b>						
<b>Undistributed Expenditures - Other Support Services – Students – Regular (Guidance) 1998-99</b>						
	<b>Brigantine City</b>		<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Twp.</b>	<b>Ventnor City</b>	<b>Three District Average</b>
		<b>% Total</b>				
<b>Support Services - Guidance</b>		<b>Oper. Expen.</b>				
Salaries	\$57,683	63%	\$82,240	\$148,778	\$6,000	\$79,006
Salaries of Secretarial & Clerical Assts.	\$33,913	37%	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Purchased Prof. & Technical Serv.	\$37	0%	\$6,513	\$0	\$0	\$2,171
Supplies and Materials	\$84	0%	\$803	\$0	\$2,500	\$1,101
Other Objects	\$0	0%	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Support Services - Guidance</b>	<b>\$91,717</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$89,556</b>	<b>\$148,778</b>	<b>\$8,500</b>	<b>\$82,278</b>
Total # Students	1,215		950	1,307	1,032	1,096
Total Guidance Cost Per Pupil	<b>\$75.49</b>		<b>\$94.27</b>	<b>\$113.83</b>	<b>\$8.24</b>	<b>\$75.01</b>

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

### **Recommendation:**

**The Brigantine School District does a commendable job of providing counseling services and utilizing staff and community resources. It is recommended that the school district eliminate the multiple functions that the elementary school counselor performs. The same individual should not assume the diverse roles of counselor and disciplinarian. While it may appear cost effective to split the time of this one individual, the district should recognize that the role of a disciplinarian is an administrative function. When resources are stretched too thinly, the program can suffer as a result. The district recognizes the need to provide counseling to its younger students, and it should consider following through with the resources to do so. These measures would enable the complete scope of the guidance function to have the opportunity for successful implementation.**

## **Library and Media Services**

The Brigantine elementary and middle schools each have a library/media center. There is a library/media specialist at each site, supplemented by a clerk who alternates between the two sites. The elementary media specialist also provides general coverage for the cafeteria, playground and bus supervision.

The mission of the library is to support the classroom curricula and to educate the children in the use of as many ways to retrieve, and present, information as possible including the Internet, videos, CD's and books. This was recently accomplished as both media centers underwent capital and technological upgrades. As a result, the review team noted that each library had sufficient space to accommodate a class, as well as, other individuals who wish to concurrently visit the library. Bookshelves are completely accessible to all students, especially the young children. Each area of the media center has a clear line of vision for purposes of supervision. Finally, both the elementary and middle school libraries are automated. Each media center has six terminals that have direct access to the Internet. In addition, the elementary library/media center has four terminals equipped with CD-ROMs for the students' use and a computer laboratory directly adjacent to it. The lab can accommodate a full class.

### Elementary

The media center is part of the new elementary school structure completed in 1995. During the move to the new facility, it became evident that there was much weeding to be done in order to bring the collection up-to-date. The school PTA offered to help and embarked on a fundraising campaign. Eventually over 8,000 new books were placed on the shelves.

There is classroom instruction for kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grades. Age appropriate topics such as the use of the library, types of books and the basics of the card catalog are taught.

### Middle School

The middle school library originally functioned as a part of the municipal library system. In September, 1997, the library reopened to serve only the middle school population. The collection was upgraded to reflect the clientele and a weeding project was undertaken. Similar to the elementary school experience, the PTA continues to play a significant role in fund raising for the library collection and in making recommendations for further library enhancements.

Classroom instruction takes place through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. A culminating activity of this instruction is a research paper that is required for graduation. Skills taught include, the use of bibliographies and encyclopedias.

The student enrollment numbers are 725 students at the elementary school and 520 students at the middle school. The recommendations contained in the Department of Education's Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing indicate recommended staffing levels of 1:500 at the elementary school level and 1:337 at the middle school level. The media specialists have been able to conduct classroom instruction in spite of the high student to media specialist ratio at the elementary school. This has been accomplished with the assistance of a library assistant, who spends a portion of each day in both media centers. Expenditures for 1998-99 for Brigantine and the comparable school districts are as follows:

<b>Brigantine City Board of Education and Comparable School Districts</b>						
<b>Educational Media Services/School Library 1998-99</b>						
	<b>Brigantine City</b>		<b>Absecon City</b>	<b>Lumberton Township</b>	<b>Ventnor City</b>	<b>Three District Average</b>
		<b>% Total</b>				
		<b>Operating</b>				
		<b>Expense</b>				
Salaries	\$111,433	80.5%	\$46,964	\$122,893	\$84,807	\$84,888
Aide Salary	\$0	0.0%	\$6,519	0	0	\$2,173
Purchased Professional Education Services	\$0	0.0%	\$7,902	\$9,110	\$6,576	\$7,863
Other Purchased Services	\$882	0.6%	\$2,714	0	0	\$905
Supplies & Materials	\$26,188	18.9%	\$3,016	\$58,957	\$11,835	\$24,603
Textbooks	\$0	0.0%	\$7,441	0	0	\$2,480
Other Objects	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$7,408	0	\$2,469
<b>Total Educational Media Services/Library</b>	<b>\$138,503</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$74,556</b>	<b>\$198,368</b>	<b>\$103,218</b>	<b>\$125,381</b>
Total # Students	1,215		950	1,307	1,032	1,096
Total Library Cost Per Pupil	\$113.99		\$78.48	\$151.77	\$100.02	\$114.36
Library Cost Per Pupil - Salaries	\$92.44		\$67.47	\$101.00	\$88.55	\$85.67
Library Cost Per Pupil - Supplies & Materials	\$21.55		\$11.01	\$50.78	\$11.47	\$24.42

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

### **Recommendation:**

**The district is currently discussing plans to link the elementary, middle school and municipal library's catalog and offer on-line access of library records from home terminals. One of the chief responsibilities of a school librarian is to teach students how to access and evaluate information in order to use it more efficiently. In order to better serve its students, it is recommended that the district take steps to expedite the complete linkage of the card catalogs in both schools and the municipal library.**

### **Athletics and Extracurricular Activities**

The Brigantine City School District offers a wide variety of athletic and extracurricular activities for its middle and elementary school students. These diverse learning experiences supplement the educational goals and objectives of the district and are conducted outside the regular classroom program. The activities include band, vocal music, clubs, dramatic or musical presentations, and intramural and interscholastic sports.

The guidance goal for each pupil is a balanced program of appropriate academic studies and activities. Students must maintain good academic standing in order to participate. Good academic standing for kindergarten through fourth grade students is determined in consultation with the classroom teacher. Fifth through eighth grade students are required to receive passing grades in all subjects, which are taught three times per week, or more.

The district sponsored six athletic programs during the 1998-99 school year in the middle school. There were a total of 132 students participating in the programs. Boy's and girl's basketball had the highest participation levels of all the programs. The girl's basketball program had an impressive 52-3 record for the 1997-99 seasons and garnered numerous county titles.

The following table reflects the cost level of athletics at Brigantine and the comparable school districts in 1998-99:

Brigantine City Board of Education						
School Sponsored Athletic Activities 1998-99						
			Absecon	Lumberton	Ventnor	Three District
	Brigantine City		City	Township	City	Average
		% Total Operating				
		Expense				
<b>School Sponsored Athletic Activities</b>						
Salaries of Teachers	\$13,981	65%	\$9,237	\$18,150	\$8,500	\$11,962
Purchased Services	\$0	0%	\$0	\$0	\$4,236	\$1,412
Supplies and Materials	\$0	0%	\$0	\$2,323	\$5,004	\$2,442
Other Objects	\$7,414	35%	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Miscellaneous Expenditures	\$0	0%	\$0	\$3,801	\$0	\$1,267
<b>Total School Sponsored Athletic Activities</b>	<b>\$21,395</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$9,237</b>	<b>\$24,274</b>	<b>\$17,740</b>	<b>\$17,083</b>
Total # of Students	1,215		950	1,307	1,032	1,096
<b>Total Athletic Cost Per Pupil</b>	<b>\$17.61</b>		<b>\$9.72</b>	<b>\$18.57</b>	<b>\$17.19</b>	<b>\$15.59</b>

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

Brigantine falls within the average range of total athletic costs per pupil for two of the three comparable school districts. If all three comparable districts are analyzed, Brigantine is approximately 18% above the total athletic costs.

In the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) 1998-99 Edition of New Jersey Teacher Salaries and Salary Guides, Brigantine's average coaching stipends of \$1,774 also falls within the average range for all stipends paid for athletic activities.

The programs are initiated, based upon student participation and the ability to feed existing programs, at the local public and parochial high schools. As an example, there has been discussion of starting a crew program in the middle school. The local high schools have a student population of approximately 800-900 students participating in crew. Utilization of boats and other equipment are also an available option.

**The district is to be commended for analyzing the number of participants and associated costs of each activity. This is done both prior to implementation of a program and as a year end function.**

Extracurricular activities are distributed throughout the district and include eleven programs. A total of 368 students participated in the programs during school year 1998-99. Band/Strings had 103 student participants and Chorus had 120 student participants.

The following chart illustrates the considerable differences among the comparable school districts:



<b>Brigantine City Board of Education</b>						
<b>School Sponsored Co-curricular Activities – Instruction 1998-99</b>						
	<b>Brigantine City</b>		<b>Absecon</b>	<b>Lumberton</b>	<b>Ventnor</b>	<b>Three District</b>
		<b>% Total</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Township</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Average</b>
		<b>Operating</b>				
		<b>Expense</b>				
<b>School Sponsored Co-curricular Activities</b>						
Salaries of Teachers	34,861	78%	\$4,523	\$22,059	\$11,150	\$12,577
Purchased Services	8,250	19%	\$0	\$0	\$3,250	\$1,083
Supplies and Materials	1,438	3%	\$0	\$1,651	\$0	\$550
Other Objects	0	0%	\$415	\$0	\$4,197	\$1,537
<b>Total School Sponsored Co-curricular Activities</b>	<b>\$44,549</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$4,938</b>	<b>\$23,710</b>	<b>\$18,597</b>	<b>\$15,727</b>
Total # of Students	1,215		950	1,307	1,032	1,096
<b>Total Co-curricular Cost Per Pupil</b>	<b>\$36.67</b>		<b>\$5.20</b>	<b>\$18.14</b>	<b>\$18.02</b>	<b>\$14.35</b>

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

Although most of the district's athletic and extra-curricular spending occurs at the middle school level, its cost per pupil and resultant ranking are calculated based upon the district's entire enrollment. The cost per student participant is quite high when contrasted with the comparable school districts. The average cost per pupil at Brigantine is 61% higher than the three-district average.

According to the New Jersey Department of Education March, 1999, Comparative Spending Guide, Brigantine was ranked 62 out of 91 in a low to high cost statewide ranking of districts of similar type (K-8 with total enrollment above 751 students). This category included athletics and co-curricular activities as a combined total.

In contrast, however, the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) 1998-99 Edition of New Jersey Teacher Salaries and Salary Guides, Brigantine's average extra-curricular stipends of \$1,241 fall towards the lower end of the average.

It should be noted that, due to the remote location of Brigantine, there are many programs offered by the school district which would normally be supplemented by local non-profit and for profit organizations. In addition, all advisors, coaches and teachers receive compensation for their responsibilities, which explains the greater salary costs at Brigantine.

Brigantine School District has partnered with the city to offer a substantial educational and recreational program. Part of this program is a six-week summer enrichment camp for children in grades one through six.

**The district should be commended for the array of program offerings which it has assembled, both, as an outgrowth of school activities and in partnering with the city for extended activities throughout the summer months.**

### **Health Services**

Two full-time nurses, a health clerk and a school doctor provide health services for the Brigantine City School District, which has a student population of 1,215 students.

The primary functions of the nurses include general student assistance (first aid and medical checks), administering individual medications and instructional assistance, conducting screenings for physicals, coordination of inoculations, and arranging referrals. All supplies are ordered through an area medical supply company that offers competitive prices. Both nurses are state certified registered nurses who, also, provide health education in specific subject areas. The nurses report to their respective building principals.

The school doctor is responsible for performing physicals for all kindergarten, fourth and seventh grade students. In addition, sports physicals are provided for all students prior to tryouts. The district employs the doctor as a contracted service, that must be renewed annually by the board of education.

The clerical person is shared between the elementary and middle school nurses. Her functions include typing incident reports and referrals, post-immunization follow-up and contacting parents in various situations. A significant achievement has been the computerization of all student immunization data, which was previously manually recorded.

The student enrollment numbers and, hence, the nurses' workloads, are 725 students at the elementary school and 520 students at the middle school. The recommendations contained in the Department of Education's Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing indicate recommended staffing levels of 1:500 at the elementary school level and 1:675 at the middle school level. The nurses have been able to conduct the additional health education programs in spite of the high student to nurse ratios. This may be attributed to the regular hours and functions maintained by the health clerk.

The review team visited both school health offices and spoke with each nurse. The health office facilities are centrally located in each school and appear to have sufficient space to accommodate a variety of needs. Students, requiring varying levels of assistance, came in and out of the office during the interviews.

The nurses are required to prepare and submit monthly statistical health reports to the superintendent's office. These reports have an identical format outlining the number of communicable diseases, the recorded number of health office visits, and the specific type of medical administration necessary. The nurses belong to the Cape May County Association of Nurses, which serves as a networking tool and educational component.

On average, 74-84 students are treated in each health office daily. It should be noted that the salary of the elementary school nurse was not contained in the salary line item for Health Services. If the missing salary item were added, the total salary line for health services would then change to \$86,193. The per pupil expenditure for 1998-99 would be \$70.94 and Brigantine's health service costs would be consistent with the comparative districts average.

Brigantine City Board of Education and Comparable School Districts						
Health Services 1998-99						
	Brigantine City	Absecon City	Lumberton Township	Ventnor City	Three District Average	
		% Total Operating Expense				
<b>Health Services</b>						
Salaries	\$55,584	78%	\$53,085	\$110,293	\$44,187	\$69,188
Purchased Professional & Tech Services	\$11,519	16%	\$7,682	\$11,145	\$316	\$6,381
Other Purchased Services	\$61	0.1%	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Supplies and Materials	\$3,764	5%	\$2,519	\$7,663	\$3,183	\$4,455
<b>Total Health Services</b>	<b>\$70,928</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$63,286</b>	<b>\$129,101</b>	<b>\$47,686</b>	<b>\$80,024</b>
Total # Students	1,215		950	1,307	1,032	<b>1,096</b>
Health Cost Per Pupil	\$58.38		\$66.62	\$98.78	\$46.21	<b>\$73.01</b>

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

The school district should be commended for the innovative programs, which have been implemented in response to student needs. Examples include:

The elementary school nurse, the physical fitness instructor and second grade teacher undertook a Health Fitness Program. It was initiated in response to an average weight gain of 30 pounds per pupil for students in the second to fourth grades. In a format which alternates between boys, girls and various grades, an exercise program was implemented from 8:30 to 9:30. The primary focus was on the months from November to March, a period when inclement weather can lead to relative inactivity.

A Website for School Nurses, Educators and Health Care Providers was authored by the middle school nurse. It was undertaken as part of graduation requirements for a Master's Degree. The "School Health Culture Zone" is an attempt to understand diverse cultural backgrounds and bridge influences specifically as they relate to the delivery of health care. The menu includes cultural health practices, population data and links to useful resources.

### Assessment

In May, 1999, 4<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA). The results in language arts indicated that 35.2% of the students scored at the proficient level with a mean score of 191.9. In mathematics, 59.3% of the students scored at the proficient (50%) or advanced proficient (9.3%) levels with an overall mean score of 208.7. Science scores indicated that 91.7% of the students scored at either the proficient (66.7%) or advanced proficient (25%) levels. The mean score for science was 233.6. This was the first administration of this measure and Brigantine's results placed it in the second tier in Atlantic County, i.e., above the county average and, also, above the state average in all areas, with the exception of language arts.

Eighth grade students in Brigantine participated in the statewide assessment test, the Grade 8 Proficiency Assessment (GEPA). In the language arts section of the test 80.2% of the students scored at the proficient level with a mean score of 214.8. In the mathematics portion 71.7% of the students scored either proficient (54.7%) or advanced proficient (17%) with an overall mean score of 215.2.

Both the elementary school and the middle school have established objectives for the 1999-00 school year to improve their performance on the state tests. Brigantine Elementary School's goal is to improve their score in language literacy and mathematics by 10%. The North Middle School's focus is on improving scores in mathematics so that 82% of the students pass the test.

The school district also administers the IOWA achievement test to students in grades 2, 3 and 5. The battery is designed to measure student achievement in the areas of reading, mathematics, language and social studies.

The review team had the opportunity to tour both the elementary school and middle school and observe many of the classrooms and activities in operation. The team was, also, housed in the middle school during the visit. The school climate was warm, friendly and conducive to educational activities. Both schools had well-established routines from student arrival to the end of the school day. The curriculum is comprehensive and offers students a wide choice of subject matter at all ability levels. The board, administration, staff and community have high expectations for student achievement and behavior.

### **Professional Development**

The Brigantine City School District sponsors a comprehensive program of staff development for its employees. The administration encourages all staff members to pursue a variety of educational activities. Areas of focus during the 1998-99 school year included many technology area topics, ESPA and GEPA component areas, art, special education, bilingual education, writing, teaching strategies, math, music, child development and curriculum design. On some topics staff members have achieved trainer status allowing them to provide further training to other faculty at a much-reduced cost.

A cooperative daylong workshop is held each year with the Ventnor and Margate School Districts in the areas of math, science and technology. Funding for these activities is provided through the district budget process, the Title II Eisenhower grant and a small amount of other grant funding.

The professional development program is established based on a staff needs assessment, feedback from departmental meetings and administrative input. Faculty evaluations of workshops, the district's standardized test scores, each schools objectives and curriculum needs also contribute to formulating the plan for professional development.

The goals of the program as stated in the 1998-99 Quality Assurance Annual Report (QAAR) were to enhance faculty proficiencies in teaching, professional improvement of staff, curriculum development and articulation, as well as, to facilitate instructional practices and social development for all students. Included in the program for 1998-99 were projects which can be grouped as follows:

- Board funded reimbursement for graduate study for up to nine credits per fiscal year.
- Board funded inservice activities in support of the instructional program.
- Staff training in the technology area was encouraged and sponsored to help reduce anxiety in this rapidly growing and changing area.
- New teachers and substitute teachers were provided with inservice activities and support.

Three full days are provided within the school calendar for professional development. In addition, the district uses the opportunity to provide further training on days when students are dismissed early.

During the 1998-99 school year, \$10,693 was expended in the area of staff development and graduate study reimbursement was \$23,280.

## **BUSINESS OFFICE**

### **Cash Management**

This section analyzes the district's management of its cash balances. The bank accounts maintained by the Brigantine Board of Education were reviewed for the purpose of identifying whether the district obtains competitive interest rates from banks and operates efficiently by reducing costs associated with maintaining its bank accounts.

An analysis was performed on each of the eight bank accounts maintained by the district in order to identify month ending balances, fees charged, interest earned and the interest rate paid to the district. The monthly ending balances for all eight of the district's bank accounts between July, 1998 and June, 1999 ranged from \$1,757,281 to \$3,072,655. During this period, the district earned \$96,096 in interest income. The district's agreement with the bank requires the district to maintain a combined monthly balance of \$2,100,000 to avoid any maintenance fees. On several occasions, the district's balance has fallen below the minimum requirement and the district was not assessed any fees by the bank.

### **Brigantine City Cash Management 1998-99**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Bank Interest Rate</b>	<b>Interest Earned</b>	<b>Month End Bal.</b>
Jul-98	4.46%	\$8,416	\$2,079,068
Aug-98	4.43%	\$10,237	\$2,987,623
Sep-98	4.22%	\$9,123	\$2,998,237
Oct-98	3.58%	\$9,715	\$3,072,655
Nov-98	3.86%	\$9,511	\$2,634,541
Dec-98	3.93%	\$8,071	\$2,474,347
Jan-99	3.88%	\$7,052	\$2,744,628
Feb-99	3.92%	\$7,702	\$2,500,540
Mar-99	3.97%	\$7,188	\$2,459,610
Apr-99	3.76%	\$6,869	\$2,051,840
May-99	3.97%	\$5,755	\$1,757,281
Jun-99	4.10%	\$6,457	\$1,785,359
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$96,096</b>	<b>\$29,545,729</b>

The district is earning interest on the full balance maintained in the bank. Most banks pay the full rate of interest only on the compensating balance and pay a reduced rate on the remaining balance. In addition, the bank pays for the district's payroll processing fees, which saves the district approximately \$3,500 - \$4,000 per year in payroll fees.

The district does not invest any of its funds with any other financial institution. There are other financial vehicles that the district could use to invest its funds, such as, the New Jersey Cash Management Fund (NJCMF) and 91-Day T-Bills. However, the NJCMF and T-Bills do not provide services such as check printing and check processing. Taking into account the costs of these services, the payroll processing paid by the district's bank and that the district is earning interest on its full balances, the district is receiving competitive rates for its funds.

The district has maintained a banking relationship with the same bank since 1995. During this time, the district has not established a banking relationship with any other institution. There are only two or three other banks on the island and those have undergone ownership changes within the past five years. Since the Island of Brigantine is isolated from the remainder of Atlantic County, the district prefers to maintain an account with a bank that has a branch on the island.

### **Recommendation:**

**The district should maintain a banking relationship with at least one other bank. This helps foster ongoing competition and helps keep the district informed of new developments and products in the banking world. In addition, approximately every three years the district should send out Request for Proposals (RFP's) in order to be sure they are getting the best possible banking services and to ensure they are receiving competitive interest rates.**

### **Organizational Structure**

The business office consists of four full-time employees and one part-time employee, including, a business administrator/board secretary, three secretaries and the treasurer of school monies. One of the business office secretaries is also the admissions office secretary. The district requires all students to re-register with the district every year. The students must provide proof of Brigantine residency. In the past, the district has had a problem with non-resident students enrolling in the Brigantine School District. The process of having all students re-register each year has saved the district thousands of dollars by not providing free education for non-residents.

### **Inventory Control**

The inventory control system is centralized in both ordering and storage. All supplies are ordered through the business office. A requisition is filled out by a teacher for the school supplies needed for the year. The principal and superintendent then authorize the requisition. The completed requisition is then sent to the business office for processing. Supplies for the business office are kept in a locked closet, located within the business office. Teaching supplies are kept in a separate location, a locked room.

The district purchases its maintenance supplies through an Atlantic County Cooperative. Paper is purchased through a shared service with the Pittsgrove Board of Education. The majority of the office and teaching supplies are purchased under state contract, through local vendors.

### **Annual Audit**

An analysis was conducted to determine if the district receives competitive proposals from accounting/auditing firms for the completion of its annual audit and, whether the district corrects any deficiencies found in the audit.

The district switched accounting firms for the 1998-99 school year audit. Prior to that year, the district had been with another accounting firm for six years. However, the auditor in the district's prior accounting firm left after the 1997-98 school year, to go work for the district's current accounting firm. The district switched accounting firms to continue its relationship with that auditor. For the 1998-99 school year, the district was charged a fee of \$9,300 for the annual audit. Although the appointment of the accounting firm is confirmed on an annual basis, the board does not seek proposals from other firms so that it may compare costs. It was unclear as to the last time the board had gone out for a Request for Proposal (RFP). Three comparative districts were surveyed as to their fees and the charges appear to be appropriate for the area.

Three years of audits were reviewed and it was found that the district does a good job of maintaining proper accounting and internal controls. In each of the three years of audits reviewed there were no major deficiencies noted.

### **Recommendation:**

**The district should periodically seek RFP's from other qualified accounting/audit firms in order to determine that it is receiving the best possible service and price for the completion of its annual audit. Although the district may be satisfied with the current level of service, it is in the best interests of the community to periodically ascertain that the rate charged remains competitive.**

### **Fixed Asset Inventory**

The district has addressed the issue of a fixed asset control and inventory. The recent conversion to Generally Accepted Accounting Principals (GAAP) for New Jersey school districts mandated that each district set up a general Fixed Asset Group of accounts and provide an inventory method to quantify the costs of fixed assets for the district.

The district had a fixed asset appraisal completed as of July 31, 1999. The district plans to update the inventory at the end of each school year. The district was charged a fee of approximately \$2,200 for the inventory.

### **Insurance**

The Brigantine Board of Education is a member of the Atlantic and Cape May Counties School Business Officials Joint Insurance Fund (ACCASBOJIF). The Brigantine Board is one of the original 16 charter members of the ACCASBOJIF, formed in 1991 under the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:18B 1-10. Since that time, this all lines risk-bearing joint insurance fund has grown to 25 districts. Collectively, they present as a single buying unit. Its goal is to provide a long-term alternative to the conventional insurance market and control expenditures. Utilizing members' resources, the ACCASBOJIF member districts make mutually advantageous decisions regarding the insurance coverage's they will offer and/or purchase. At the end of the 1999

fiscal year, an audited financial statement of the fund revealed a statutory surplus of approximately three million dollars. A staff of hired professionals administers the fund and regularly reviews the market to ensure competitiveness.

The district's 1998-99 total contribution to the ACCASBOJIF was \$124,179 for policies covering general liability, automobile liability, school board legal liability, property (including, auto physical damage), fidelity & performance (blanket), boiler & machinery, and workers' compensation. It, also, includes the cost of a risk management consultant.

The district elected to purchase a supplemental workers' compensation policy. This policy provides coverage for the additional 30% of the employee's salary (as required) for a period of one-year only (primary policy covers 70%). The annual cost of the policy is \$4,911. Although this policy is not a requirement of the ACCASBOJIF, the business administrator advised that it has been used several times over the last seven years.

The district, for an annual premium of \$4,511, purchased an additional flood insurance policy. This policy is a requirement by the ACCASBOJIF, since the district is responsible for the first \$500,000 of coverage.

In an effort to deter lawsuits, the ACCASBOJIF also requires all member districts to carry School Time Compulsory Student Accident Coverage. The annual cost to Brigantine for this policy in 1998-99 was \$2,298.

The ACCASBOJIF has an Executive Safety Committee, which offers safety incentive programs to motivate districts to maintain their established safety standards. In 1998-99, Brigantine met the general safety criteria of that program and received a \$500 reward voucher, and a "Safety Elite District" plaque in recognition of its efforts. The district accomplished this by adopting a formal safety policy, appointing a safety coordinator and safety delegates, establishing a safety committee, holding safety meetings with official minutes, conducting periodic inspections of key operations and facilities, providing certificates of insurance/hold harmless agreements, and submitting copies of facilities procedures.

### **Recommendations:**

**LGBR commends the district for participating in a joint insurance arrangement in an effort to contain costs. The administrators of the fund are efficient and the member-owners enjoyed a substantial statutory surplus, as reported at the end of the 1999 fiscal year. However, the district might consider terminating its excess workers' compensation policy to further contain costs.**

**Cost Savings: \$4,911**

**LGBR team commends the district for recognizing the important role of safety programs. The district has made exceptional efforts by exceeding program standards and assisting in reducing insurance costs. The district's concern for employee safety and a safe workplace is clearly evident through the formal recognition process established by the ACCASBOJIF Safety Program.**



## **FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS**

### **Overview**

The Brigantine City School District services a student population comprised of children in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The students are housed in a campus style facility separated into two “houses,” the Brigantine North Middle School, constructed in 1960, and an elementary school built in 1996. Secondary students attend Atlantic City High School and the Atlantic County Vocational-Technical High School.

### **Maintenance Operations**

The maintenance department consists of a director of buildings and grounds, whose responsibilities include district technology; an assistant director; and a full-time custodian/maintenance person for shipping/receiving, copier maintenance, and district inventory and computer maintenance. The director is responsible for the scheduling of work assignments, budget preparation, supervision of staff, and work order procedures. Purchasing is primarily a clerical function that is handled in the business office, although the director has budgetary oversight responsibilities.

### **Custodial Operations**

The school district employs 10 full-time and four part-time custodians. Supervision of the custodial staff is the responsibility of the head working custodian in concert with the building principals and the director of buildings and grounds.

### **Custodial Staffing**

Part of the review process consists of identifying custodial staffing needs utilizing an objective, quantitative, multi-step process based upon the size and use of the facility. The process entails:

- Review of any existing district work and time standards for the various cleaning tasks within the school facility.
- Review of the custodial labor agreements to determine the number of work-hours within a negotiated workday and then reduce the workday by an off-task time allowance factor of 25%. Off-task time is defined as scheduled work breaks, interruptions, emergencies, etc.

TYPICAL SCHOOL AREAS	AVERAGE SIZE SQ. FT.	CLEANING TIME IN MINUTES
Cafeteria	10,000	150
Classrooms	1,200	15
Corridors	1,000	5
Entrances	112	5
Gymnasiums	10,000	45
Laboratories	324	20
Libraries/Music Rooms	15,000	30
Locker Rooms	1,960	25
Offices	1,200	8
Offices With Carpet	1,200	12
Restrooms	150	20
Shops/Art/Home Economics	1,200	30
Stairways	PER FLIGHT	8
Teacher's Lounges/Café	1,200	20
Auditorium	10,000	150
Multipurpose/Gym/Café	10,000	210
Multipurpose	2,400	40

NOTE: The average standard can be adjusted to reflect actual sq. ft. proportional to the standard sq. ft. for an activity.

- Obtaining floor plans of the facilities and inserting task data into the following matrix adopted from The Custodial Staffing Guidelines for Educational Facilities, published by the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers and Good School Maintenance, published by the Illinois Association of School Boards, to determine the total cleaning time for each facility.
- Compare actual and theoretical employee counts to determine if any staffing adjustments can be recommended.
- Divide this total number of minutes by the total work-hour minutes available (after adjusting by the off-task time factor). The result is the headcount needed to clean the facility.

The review team completed the above analysis for the Brigantine City School District to determine the staffing required to perform night cleaning and to establish daytime requirements for basic (statutory) boiler maintenance and porter services.

The district employs a cleaning staff of 10 full-time custodians and four part-time cleaners (12 FTE positions). Although employed by the school district and included in the number of total staff above, one custodian is assigned to clean the municipal building. The head night custodian, in addition to his other duties, is responsible for cleaning a trailer at a local non-public school that houses a basic skills program and associated equipment.

To establish the actual number of custodial positions available for cleaning, it is necessary to reduce the employed staff by the one and one-half positions assigned off-site. In addition, the district requires one position in each school for porter services and boiler maintenance. The remaining eight and one-half positions are available to clean the Brigantine school buildings. The staffing analysis utilized illustrates that the district falls below the average staff number recommended by two cleaning positions.

## **Cost of Operations**

One of the tools utilized in the review process is the NJDOE Comparative Spending Guide. This guide compares the per pupil costs of school districts in the state with comparably sized districts (between 950 and 1,307 students) and those with like grade structures (K-8). Utilizing data for the three most recent years, the Brigantine City School District three-year average cost per pupil for operations and maintenance of plant ranked 51 out of 92 comparable districts. Salaries and benefits for operations and maintenance of plant ranked 25 out of the 92.

An additional analysis compares Brigantine with three districts that are similar in terms of type, size and socio-economic factors. The complete comparison is included in a separate section of this review and is also based on information from the NJDOE Comparative Spending Guide. The school districts that were used for detailed comparison with Brigantine were Absecon City, Lumberton Township, and Ventnor City. For the purposes of the comparison of operations and maintenance costs, Ventnor City was excluded due to costs in this area, which were inexplicably low.

Based on the comparison of per pupil expenditures for selected cost factors for the 1998-99 school year for the three districts, Brigantine's per pupil costs for operations and maintenance were 5% above the average, and 1% above the average for salaries and benefits.

An additional tool used in the review process for identifying potential cost savings in the area of operational costs within the school district includes the following:

1. Perform a square footage analysis for the district and compare the cost per square foot against regional benchmarks and other school districts reviewed by Local Government Budget Review teams. For regional benchmarking, the review team utilizes the American School and University (ASU), a national publication for facilities, purchasing and business administration. The *ASU* performs annual maintenance and operations surveys of school districts around the country. It provides reports on the cost to operate schools (including payroll, outside contract labor, gas, electricity, heating fuel, equipment and supplies, etc.) on a regional level. Region 2 includes New York and New Jersey.
2. Identify and analyze budget lines and accounts that appear to be high in relationship to regional benchmarks and/or similar school districts.
3. Provide areas for cost savings, based upon programs and/or efficiencies identified in other school districts or municipalities, that may be applicable in the district of review.

The following table summarizes the Brigantine City School District's cleaning, maintenance, grounds and utility costs per square foot for the 1998-99 school year:

CATEGORY	EXPENSE (\$)	EXPENSE (\$) SF	EXPENSE (\$) SF
	BRIGANTINE CITY	BRIGANTINE CITY	OCTOBER 1999 ASU
<b>CLEANING</b>			
Salaries	\$267,157	\$1.20	\$1.70
Overtime	\$4,933	\$0.02	
Supplies	\$38,965	\$0.17	\$0.12
Contracts			
<b>Subtotal - Cleaning</b>	<b>\$311,055</b>	<b>\$1.39</b>	<b>\$1.82</b>
<b>MAINTENANCE</b>			
Salaries	\$53,911	\$0.24	\$0.41
Overtime	\$1,038		
Supplies	\$86,255	\$0.39	\$0.20
Contracts	\$17,500	\$0.08	\$0.25
Misc.	\$32,352	\$0.15	\$0.05
<b>Subtotal - Maintenance</b>	<b>\$191,056</b>	<b>\$0.85</b>	<b>\$0.91</b>
<b>Cleaning and Maintenance</b>	<b>\$502,111</b>	<b>\$2.25</b>	<b>\$2.73</b>
<b>GROUNDS</b>			
Salaries	\$0	\$0	\$0.21
Overtime			
Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0.09
Contracts	\$0	\$0	\$0.03
<b>Subtotal- Grounds</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0.33</b>
<b>UTILITIES</b>			
Natural Gas	\$55,638	\$0.25	\$0.31
Electric	\$226,400	\$1.01	\$0.68
Water/Sewer			\$0.23
Other Fuel			\$0.24
<b>Subtotal- Utilities</b>	<b>\$282,038</b>	<b>\$1.26</b>	<b>\$1.46</b>
<b>Total Maint. And Opers.</b>	<b>\$784,149</b>	<b>\$3.51</b>	<b>\$4.52</b>
<b>INSURANCE</b>	<b>\$66,000</b>	<b>\$0.30</b>	<b>\$ 0.11</b>

Source: 1998-99 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

The overall costs for plant operations for the Brigantine City School District are 22% lower than the average costs determined by the ASU survey.

The Brigantine School District combined the supervisory and work responsibilities of two departments, maintenance and computer technology, to increase efficiency and save tax dollars. However, with population growth and curriculum emphasis changes, the day-to-day operations in the district need to be re-examined to be certain that the requirements of both areas are being met.

There are increasing demands placed on the district for wiring, installation, maintenance and repair of computer equipment. In-house staff more effectively performs these tasks. Brigantine also faces the challenge of re-configuring the existing facilities to accommodate the varying needs of the student population.

## **Recommendations:**

**LGBR recommends that the school board consider the following:**

**Utilizing the existing manpower, establish two departments; a building maintenance department with one director and one general maintenance worker and a department of computer technology with one director and one general computer maintenance worker.**

**Re-align the remaining custodial staff.**

- **Establish one head day custodian position for both buildings and one head night custodian. Relieve the head night custodian of his off-site responsibilities and assign this task to a part-time custodian, reducing the time lost to travel. The head custodians will be responsible for shipping and receiving, school supplies, custodial supervision and office cleaning. In addition, the head day custodian would help with the setup and cleaning of the cafeteria.**
- **Two of the part-time custodial positions should be assigned to the cafeteria duties, including kitchen cleaning.**
- **The remaining 7.5 custodial positions should be assigned to the 3-11 p.m. shift (Suggested part-time shift, 3-7 p.m.). Cleaning duties would include hallways, bathrooms, classrooms, etc., within an assigned section.**

**These suggested changes would allow the district to address the needs in both the areas of technology and facilities without increasing staff. It would also allow trained personnel to concentrate on their specific areas, thus, increasing productivity.**

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Pupil Transportation Overview**

The safe and efficient transportation of New Jersey's public and private school students has received increasing attention from the media, state and local officials, and taxpaying residents due to escalating costs. There are numerous factors that can affect transportation expenses, including management's knowledge of transportation, employee salaries and benefits, terms of negotiated agreements, privatization, competition for services, quality of route and vehicle specifications, geography, board policies. The Local Government Budget Review process will examine the level of service provided to the students in the Brigantine School District, as well as, the costs of such services.

State aid is provided to qualifying school districts under the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1 through 25, which stipulate that elementary school pupils who live more than two miles from their public school or secondary pupils who live more than two and one half miles from their public school are entitled to transportation to and from school. In addition, the statute grants

students attending a remote school, other than a public school, operated not for profit, located not more than 20 miles from the pupil's residence, transportation within the requirements of the N.J.C.A. 6:21-1 through 2.7. State law restricts the cost of non-public transportation to a stated yearly amount (1997-98, \$675; 1998-99, \$702; 1999-00, \$707). If transportation cannot be provided for this amount, or less, parents are reimbursed the legislated amount. State aid is provided to school districts for this mandate service.

There are several terms utilized to differentiate between students whose transportation to and from school is an expense recognized as necessary and, therefore, qualifying for state aid and those students whose services are provided for reasons of safety or other local conditions or policies. Students who reside a qualifying distance from the school are said to live "remote from the school house" or are termed "eligible", referring to state aid requirements.

"Courtesy" busing is defined as transportation of students who reside two miles or less from the school for elementary grades and two and one half miles or less for the secondary grades. Under state guidelines, this transportation is unaided, if provided. The term "courtesy" busing is used interchangeably with "safety" busing, "hazardous" busing and "ineligible" students, again referring to state aid qualifications.

### **District Operations**

Brigantine is a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade district with resident secondary students attending the Atlantic City High School. The school district utilizes private contractors and joint transportation agreements with the Atlantic County Special Services School District for pupil transportation needs. A district secretary is assigned to transportation on a part-time basis. Transportation management and oversight is the responsibility of the district business administrator.

### **Transportation "To and From" School**

Transportation efficiency in public school districts can be defined as "equal or improved services for fewer dollars." The strategy of "tiering" bus routes and bidding the "tiers" as separate or combined packages is one of the methods utilized to increase efficiency and save transportation monies. When runs are combined or tiered, each vehicle is assigned to a group of runs, thereby, utilizing the vehicle for as many hours during the day as is possible, without compromising instructional time. The basic principal of efficiency is:

Yearly vehicle operational costs, i.e., lease or amortized cost, repair parts and labor, and insurance expenses are stable, regardless of how many trips the vehicle is assigned to during the course of the year. (Excluding fuel, driver salaries, benefits, etc.)

When these operational costs are applied to Vehicle A for Year 1 at \$15,000 and that vehicle is assigned to only an elementary school run throughout the year, then the operational costs for that bus run would be \$15,000. The same vehicle assigned to runs for a high school, middle school and elementary school in the morning and afternoon produces a per run cost of \$5,000.

The factors affecting the costs of pupil transportation in the Brigantine School District include:

#### Geographic Considerations

Brigantine City is located outside of Atlantic City. The higher cost of special education routes can be attributed to the location of the district and the obvious difficulties in combining Brigantine City students on routes with other districts outside of the Atlantic City area.

#### Board Policies

The Brigantine City Board of Education has developed transportation policies, which govern the following:

- a. The transportation of students eligible under the state statutes and those students considered “courtesy.” The policy grants transportation to students in kindergarten through fourth grade, residing in specific areas of the city, in spite of their ineligibility under the state aid guidelines.
- b. The provision that all contractors meet state, local and contract specifications and conform to district regulations.

#### Personnel Limitations

The business administrator performs transportation management functions with part-time assistance from a secretary. District staff has not received training in the area of pupil transportation and, therefore, is unable to evaluate the cost of the transportation program or to institute procedures to reduce expenses.

#### Route Structure

An examination of the District Report of Transported Resident Students (DRTRS) and the history of renewals for contracted services in the district, illustrates the following:

1. The district renews individual route contracts on a yearly basis, restricting increases to 2%, and bidding only new routes that are needed due to increased enrollment or changing student requirements.
2. Routes renewed for the 1998-99 school year were bid in school years ranging from 1985-86 to 1997-98.
3. There has been no competition for transportation work in Brigantine. Only one company responds to route bid specifications.
4. Routes for special needs students are handled through the Atlantic County Special Services School District transportation office.

The DRTRS indicates that, although routes in the district have been added piece-meal through the years with no attempt at consolidation or tiering, the contractor has been operating on an efficient basis. Realizing that the bell schedules allowed sufficient time for runs to be linked together, the vendor has combined Brigantine runs into tiered routes, thus, operating with fewer buses and drivers. These efficiencies, however, have not been passed along to Brigantine as savings.

The Brigantine School Board approved 31 individual routes for renewal for the 1998-99 school year, with a total cost of \$448,432. The contractor packaged the 31 separate runs into 15 routes, reducing his bus needs by half.

#### **Recommendation:**

**LGBR recommends that the district utilize the detailed analysis provided by the review team and re-bid all transportation routes, offering multi-year contracts for the successful bidders. Bidding the runs as tiers will provide savings, and could promote interest from additional contractors. With only a route or two being offered each year, there was no incentive for a company to expand operation into the Brigantine area. However, that could change with an expanded bid offering work for 15 vehicles and long term income through a multi-year contract.**

**Estimated Cost Savings: \$62,000**

#### **Courtesy Busing**

Courtesy busing is defined as transportation provided for students who do not meet the state profile for eligible students to and from school. As stated earlier in this review section, pupil transportation is governed through statute, and school districts are provided with state aid for transportation for students who reside “remote” from the school.

Districts that transport students who live “less than remote,” or closer than the aided distances, are said to be providing courtesy busing. The district, which refers to this busing as “safety” or “hazardous” busing, makes the argument that a lack of sidewalks and/or busy roadways make it unsafe for students to walk to and from school.

The following table gives an overview of courtesy busing for the past three years:

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Courtesy Students</b>	<b>Regular Students</b>
1997-98	185	733
1998-99	213	745
1999-00	222	735

The regular student count excludes special needs, non-public and out-of-district special needs students.

The district has a policy that governs the provision of courtesy busing for students who travel along hazardous highways or roadways that the district deems hazardous. These are outlined within the policy. The district provides courtesy busing for non-public students attending the Saint Philip the Apostle School under the same policy guidelines.

Legislation permits courtesy busing but does not fund it through state aid. However, legislation has been enacted which permits subscription busing, whereby, the families are charged for the costs of transportation, if the students are not eligible under the state mileage restrictions.

As of October 15, 1998, the district reported a total of 213 students being provided courtesy busing at an approximate cost of \$95,200. While LGBR realizes that hazardous conditions and



areas without sidewalks pose potential dangers to students who walk to and from school, providing transportation for less than remote students increases the tax burden on all citizens of the state.

LGBR also recognizes the futility of recommending the abolition of courtesy busing, particularly in an area such as Brigantine City, where the schools are located within an area with increasingly heavy traffic patterns. Therefore, the team suggests the following.

### **Recommendation:**

**LGBR recommends that the district monitor the hazardous areas to determine if there is a continuing need for courtesy busing within the district.**

### **Extracurricular Transportation**

Transportation services for athletic and field trips are procured through a quote system. As there is little competition in the area for pupil transportation work, there would be little benefit in seeking numbers separately, through the bid process, for extracurricular transportation.

### **Non-Public Transportation**

Students attending private or non-public school are entitled to transportation under the same statute and guidelines that govern public school student transportation, i.e., elementary school pupils who live more than two miles from their school or secondary pupils who live more than two and one half miles from their school are entitled to state aided transportation. However, such transportation shall meet additional requirements. One of these requirements limits the cost of transportation for non-public students to a mandated amount that is determined by the state each year. When the costs of transportation exceed this amount, the district must reimburse the parents for providing their own transportation to and from the non-public school. The amount of the reimbursement to parents is also restricted to the statutory amount.

In addition, parents requesting non-public transportation for their children must file application with the district by set deadlines, meet distance requirements, and have their children enrolled in a not-for-profit non-public school.

During the year of review, 1998-99, Brigantine City provided transportation to 228 non-public students, including 43 courtesy students attending St. Philips, and paid aid, in lieu of transportation, to the families of four students. Transportation for these non-public students is supplied through contract with a private vendor.

**Brigantine City is to be commended for its efforts to transport non-public students rather than paying reimbursement aid thereby saving tax dollars.**

### **Special Needs Transportation**

Transportation for special education students in Brigantine City is provided through joint agreements with the Atlantic County Special Services School District (ACSSSD) and through contracts with a private vendor. Route costs for these services during the 1998-99 school year ranged from \$7,200 to \$32,000.

The utilization of commissions and cooperatives is recommended as a source of efficiencies. Specializing in combining the needs of several districts into cost effective routes, the role of these consortiums in pupil transportation in the state has grown tremendously. While several years ago the majority of commissions were merely conduits or LEA's, generating route packages, writing specifications and handling the bid process for the districts, with the increasing costs of vendor routes and the lack of competitive bids, more commissions and cooperatives are "going into the bus business". Purchasing vehicles and hiring their own drivers, the commissions and cooperatives are now competitors of the private vendors.

Atlantic County Special Services School District is one of the commissions that has entered into the "bus business" and is providing a variety of school van services with commission owned equipment and personnel.

The term 'competitor' is not quite accurate, however. Educational services commissions are fully functional "school districts" and, as such, are not required to bid against private vendors, but may, instead, provide services for fee to district members of the commission or enter into joint transportation agreements with non-members.

Just as privatization should not always be viewed as a quick fix for all district transportation problems, cooperative services are not always the most cost-effective method for attaining routes. In order for both of these to be effective, care must be taken in both the presentation of the information and supervision of the final product.

The LGBR team, when examining transportation costs, reviews the submitted state aid reports such as the DRTRS (District Report of Transported Resident Students) as well as the reported route information, vehicle assignments, and reported route costs.

It was noted during the analysis for the Brigantine City School District that billing from the ACSSSD does not reflect total route costs or the total number of students being transported. Bills list only those students from the district being invoiced. Therefore, if a route is being shared, it isn't possible to determine if Brigantine City is being charged a fair share of the total route cost. There is also no indication given as to the formula utilized to determine costs.

### **Recommendations:**

**LGBR recommends the following pertaining to special education route costs:**

- 1. That districts participating in cooperative transportation through the commission (ACSSSD) require additional route detail on monthly invoices such as; total number of students on route; number of students from each district; mileage per student; route costs per district.**
- 2. That the districts involved review all routes compiled by the commission prior to the start of the school year for cost and efficiency.**
- 3. That the districts develop route specifications for comparison purposes if charges by ACSSSD continue to rise.**

## **FOOD SERVICES**

The food service program in the Brigantine School District is currently privatized. Cafeteria services are contracted through a private food service management company. This vendor has provided service to the district for twelve years.

The school lunch program consists of complete and balanced Class A meals, a Food Court (available to middle school only), and ala carte snacks. The snack station foods, which eliminate soda, candy, and other high sugar products, are sold to students during lunch periods only. The management company is responsible for preparing and serving the lunches, the sale of lunch tickets, and the collection of the lunch monies. Lunch tickets are sold on a weekly basis (daily tickets also available). Students can purchase additional food from the snack stations, and/or another complete meal. When students forget a lunch or lunch money, the district allows them to charge up to two lunches. If repayment is not made after two charged meals, a peanut butter and jelly luncheon is provided.

Student supervision during lunch periods, as stated in the contract, is the responsibility of the district. The teaching staff and instructional aides are assigned to a rotation schedule of cafeteria/playground duty.

As required by the contract, the district established an advisory board composed of parents, teachers, and students. This group assists in the menu planning, as well as, initiating suggestions to improve the program. Another advantage to this committee is the increased awareness and understanding of the school lunch program and the food service operation. It opens the lines of communication between the cafeteria staff, students, parents, and administration, and encourages student lunch participation.

The contractual arrangement between the board and the management company is a one-year agreement with the possibility of two additional one-year renewals based upon board approval. At the end of the contract period, the district issues a new Request for Proposal (RFP).

The formal contract between the district and the vendor reflects the board's policy regarding board responsibility for the administration of the program, and strict compliance with the laws and regulations set forth by the State of New Jersey regarding its operation (Brigantine Board of Education Policy: 3542). The contract also reflects the board's policy on district participation and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches/milk programs (Board Policy: 3542.31).

Based on the Department of Education budget guidelines, if a district receives state and/or federal reimbursement for food service costs, or collects fees from students for the cost of meals, the activity of the entire food service operation must be recorded in a separate enterprise fund. This is not within the general fund of the budget. Enterprise funds are used to account for operations that are financed and conducted similar to private business enterprises. This is consistent with the idea that the cost of providing goods or services is financed through user charges. Any contributions made to the food service operation by the board are reported as a

lump sum contribution transferred to cover any deficits. These costs should not be included anywhere else in the budget. The Brigantine Board of Education appropriately records the operation.

The review team toured the cafeterias and production kitchens in both the elementary and the middle schools. The facilities were in excellent condition and maintained a high level of cleanliness. The team interviewed the food service director, assistant to the director, and several other staff members from the food service management company. These employees are under the supervision of the food service director, who manages the cafeteria operations in both schools, and maintains office space in each respective area. The director also provides the district with all of the required financial and statistical reports on a monthly basis. The team had the opportunity to observe the lunchtime activities in both schools, and participated in several luncheon meals.

The contract between the Brigantine School District and the food service management company requires that the allowable management/administrative fee is specifically stated as reimbursable on a “cents per meal” or “flat fee” basis. The management/administrative fees charged by the vendor are based upon \$13,500 per annum per one school calendar year, commencing with the 1997-98 school year. Payments to the vendor are calculated on the basis of a 10-month calendar and divided into 42 weekly payments, with cost increases no greater than 20% over the additional two-year renewal periods. Addendums to the current negotiated contract are required for each renewal year, ending with the 1999-00 school year. The vendor also has a fiscal arrangement for special functions, at a charge of \$0.20 per meal equivalent. In addition to the management/administrative fees, the board incurs all operating expenses relevant to salaries, benefits, supplies and materials, and the cost of sales.

	1998-99	% Cost Ranges vs. Income	Market Rate
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$336,807</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Cost of Goods	\$155,599	46%	39% - 45%
Payroll (Incl. Mgmt fees)	\$145,404	43%	40% - 45%
Supplies & Materials	\$11,510	3%	4% - 5%
Miscellaneous	\$9,902	3%	2% - 5%

During the 1998-99 school year, 164,191 meals were served. This included a total of 120,966 Class A meals, and 43,225 meal equivalents. The per meal price in both elementary and middle schools was \$1.55 for students and \$2.25 for adults, while the state lunch price is \$1.85 for elementary and \$2.00 for high school. Student participation in the school lunch program during the 1998-99 school year was 84%. Receipts from the lunch program, special functions, and any other income accrued as outlined in section 8A of the contract, and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:17-34, are deposited in the board’s general operating account.

<b>Brigantine City Food Service Enterprise Fund Operations 1996-1999</b>			
	<b>1998-99</b>	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1996-97</b>
<b>OPERATING REVENUES:</b>			
School Lunch program	\$89,800	\$74,783	\$69,639
Adult and Other Sales	\$86,652	\$66,090	\$65,753
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$176,452</b>	<b>\$140,873</b>	<b>\$135,392</b>
<b>NON OPERATING REVENUES:</b>			
State School Lunch Program	\$8,887	\$7,844	\$7,315
National School Lunch Program	\$132,906	\$118,271	\$107,807
U.S.D.A.Commodities	\$15,845	\$23,053	\$14,266
Interest Revenue	\$2,717	\$1,876	\$2,939
Other	\$0	\$844	\$640
<b>Total Non-operating Revenues</b>	<b>\$160,355</b>	<b>\$151,888</b>	<b>\$132,967</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$336,807</b>	<b>\$292,761</b>	<b>\$268,359</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES:</b>			
Depreciation	\$9,068	\$9,068	\$14,798
Salaries	\$111,437	\$99,879	\$95,170
Management Fee	\$14,040	\$13,821	\$11,300
Supplies and Materials	\$11,510	\$1,715	\$3,184
Benefits	\$19,927	\$18,360	\$17,273
Miscellaneous	\$9,902	\$4,498	\$11,657
Cost of Sales	\$155,599	\$133,361	\$121,470
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$331,483</b>	<b>\$280,702</b>	<b>\$274,852</b>
<b>Net Income/Loss Before Board Contribution</b>	<b>\$5,324</b>	<b>\$12,059</b>	<b>-\$6,493</b>

In a discussion with the president of the food service management company, the team was advised that, during their twelve-year contractual relationship with the district, the program has remained self-sufficient. Operating revenues have steadily increased and profits maintained since 1996. Figures from the Food Service Enterprise Fund from 1996 to 1999, taken from the respective years' Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, are shown above.

Additional statistical data and analysis documentation shows that in the 1998-99 school year there were 120,966 total student meals were served, 164,191 total meals plus equivalent, 176 serving days, averaging 933 per day total meals. The adjusted cost per meal was \$2.04 based on the government meal equivalent for free lunches in 1998-99.

#### **Recommendation:**

The team found that the enterprise operations have been profitable and free of board subsidy for the period reviewed and in prior years. This is evidenced in the CAFR reports and statistical information provided by the district. It is the team's recommendation that the district and the vendor continue to work together in this cooperative and efficient manner. The team further recommends that the district incorporate into the language of the contract, vendor responsibility to maintain the profit or absolve the district from any deficit incurred. The district should continue the practice of testing the market on a regular basis through the RFP process.

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Brigantine City Board of Education consists of seven members who are appointed by the mayor to serve overlapping three-year terms. Over a three year period members are appointed, three in one year, two the next and two the next in accordance with 18A:12-9. On occasion, there has been a replacement named for a member who did not complete the term of office. The board meets once per month, with special meetings held as necessary. In 1999, a referendum was held on whether to change from a Type I (appointed board) to a Type II (elected board). The electorate soundly defeated it.

The superintendent, in consultation with the board president and the board secretary, prepares the agenda for the regularly scheduled meetings or any special board meetings. The agenda, along with supportive materials, is distributed to board members on the Friday prior to the meeting (normally the next Tuesday). Written copies of the agenda are available for the public at the meeting and allow time for public commentary. Attendance by the public during the LGBR review was limited. As in many districts, attendance appears to be issue oriented.

The board operates through a committee system, with appointments made by the board president on a yearly basis. Each standing committee is charged with making recommendations to the full board in their particular area of operation. Board committees include curriculum/strategic planning, facilities, finance, negotiations, personnel and policy/transportation/safety. Each committee usually has three members, with the board president and superintendent serving as ex officio members. Meetings of the various committees are held on an as-needed basis.

The review team attended several Brigantine Board of Education meetings (including the reorganization meeting) and was impressed by the businesslike and efficient manner in which they were conducted. It was obvious that the board president, individual board members and the administration were interested in conducting productive, efficient meetings and in good communications with the public. The school district has clearly delineated policies as to the role of individual board members and the board as a whole. Board policies were up to date and appear to be revised on a regular basis. The board evaluates itself yearly, in a continuing effort to improve its operational effectiveness. The board and administration work diligently to stay within this framework and, by doing so, contribute greatly to the effectiveness of the operation and a positive public perception of the district.

### **Legal Fees**

The Brigantine Board of Education utilizes an area law firm to provide services as solicitor. The board appoints, on a yearly basis, during its reorganization meeting. Services are provided for a retainer fee of \$6,000 per year. The fee includes attendance at monthly meetings and routine telephone contact regarding the meeting. Additional work is billed at \$85 per hour. The Board also appoints counsel for labor and counsel for special education issues on a yearly basis. These services are only used on an as needed basis. During 1998-99, the district expended \$21,200 for legal matters in all areas. Expenditures in the comparison districts for 1998-99 were \$13,770 in Absecon City, \$21,863 in Ventnor City and \$5,008 in Lumberton Township.

**Administration and Board Expenses**

The expenses incurred for both the board and administration were minimal and within reasonable limits. Board expenses were mainly limited to the membership cost of the New Jersey School Boards Association. Administration costs were related to membership in professional organizations and attendance at local conferences.

**Board/Superintendent**

As required by New Jersey School Code 18A:17-20.3, the board of education evaluates the superintendent on an annual basis. The board president appoints a committee of the board to complete the rather extensive document. In interviews with both board members and administration and review of district documentation and observation, it was obvious that everyone is cognizant of their roles and very careful not to infringe upon each other's areas of responsibility. The superintendent and every board member spoke of the open lines of communication that exist in the district and the benefits derived from it. The team found there to be a very healthy respect and appreciation for the support that the board and administration receive from both city officials and the community.

**Sending and Receiving Relationship**

The Brigantine City School District has been in a sending and receiving relationship with the Atlantic City School District for many years. The district currently sends 280 students grade nine through twelve to the Atlantic City High School (ACHS). This relationship is reaffirmed by the Board of Education, on a yearly basis, through action on the tuition contract agreement. The amount agreed upon (estimated cost per pupil) minus or plus any prior years adjustment is paid in ten equal monthly payments. For the 1998-99 school year, the Brigantine Board approved a contract in the amount of \$2,986,796 for 260 regular education students. This amount included a \$126,796 adjustment from a prior year. This approval represented an \$11,000 per student tuition rate. In addition, Brigantine pays tuition charges of \$250,000 or \$12,500 per student for special education services. Tuition charges increased significantly in the district as a result of the construction of a new high school facility in Atlantic City. The district has very little control over these costs, which represent approximately 26% of yearly expenditures. Reconciliation of the tentative per pupil charges and the actual charge is made no later than the third year following the original contract year.

There is a general feeling among the staff that the relationship and communications with the Atlantic City School District has improved. Curriculum articulation meetings are now held on a regular basis and the guidance staff provides a comprehensive orientation program for eighth grade students. The child study team is contacted and involved when a change of placement or program for a Brigantine student is initiated.

Approximately 75-80% of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students elect to attend ACHS while 20-25% attend parochial school. Some students had elected to attend a local charter school but had to return to ACHS when it was closed. Another charter school will be in operation next year, thus, offering students another alternative. Tuition charges at the charter school that closed were \$2,800 less than the tuition charges at ACHS.

### III. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ISSUES

An area that frequently presents significant opportunities for savings is negotiated contracts. While they represent opportunities for savings, the savings and contract improvements are most likely to occur incrementally, through a well-conceived process of redeveloping compensation packages to be equitable and comprehensive. For this reason, we present those issues subject to collective bargaining in this section. Review team recommendations, conclusions or statements of fact are inserted in bold type within the contract language summary.

#### BRIGANTINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT

The current agreement with the Brigantine Education Association and the Board of Education of Brigantine City was signed on May 18, 1999 and took effect on July 1, 1999 and runs through June 30, 2002. The 59 page agreement applies to certified staff to include: classroom teachers, special area teachers (art, music, physical education, librarians, reading, home economics, industrial technology, foreign language, computer), nurses, guidance counselors, psychologist, social worker and special school teachers. In addition, the agreement covers the attendance officer, clerk typists, secretaries, instructional aides and custodial and maintenance personnel.

#### **Salaries**

Employees are paid twice monthly, except in December, in which they are paid once, on or about the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

#### **Additional remuneration: (1999-2000)**

Home Instruction	\$27.64 per hour
Summer Instruction	\$27.64 per hour
Detention Supervisor	\$27.64 per hour
Substitute Calling	\$2,407 (school year)
Overnight Extended Day Trips	\$75.00 (four hours or more)

#### **Teacher Hours and Work Load**

The teacher in-school workday shall not exceed seven hours. Each teacher receives five planning periods per week and has a 40-minute duty-free lunch. Non-instructional supervisory duties shall be on a rotating basis.

#### **Support Staff Schedule**

##### Secretaries/Attendance Officer/Data Processor

The work schedule during the school year is seven and one-half hours, inclusive of a one-hour, uninterrupted lunch. During the summer the work schedule is six and one-half hours inclusive of a one-hour, uninterrupted lunch.

#### **Custodial/Maintenance**

Custodial/Maintenance personnel work an eight-hour day, inclusive of a one-hour meal break.



**Instructional Aides**

The workday for an instructional aide shall be at least four and one-half hours, inclusive of at least a one-half hour break.

**Overtime**

Support staff members who work in excess of their normal work hours shall be compensated at one and one-half the normal hourly rate. The employee may also accept compensatory time based on the same calculation.

**Work Year**Teacher Work Year

The work year for teachers is 183 days, with three days designated for staff development. New teachers work one additional day for orientation.

**Support Staff Work Year**Secretarial & Attendance Officer/Data Processor

Twelve-month employees work from July 1 to June 30. Ten-month employees work from September 1 through June 30.

**Custodial/ Maintenance**

Twelve-month employees work from July 1 through June 30.

**Instructional Aides**

The work year is the same as the teaching staff.

**Clerk/Typist**

Twelve-month employees work year is July 1 through June 30. Ten-month employees work year is September 1 through June 30.

**Holidays**

Twelve-month employees receive seventeen holidays with pay.

**Recommendation:**

**The holiday provision in the contract contains confusing language. It provides for 17 holidays of which 12 are specified. It further indicates that an additional six will be specified once the school calendar is set. The numbers in the contract add up to eighteen holidays and, if the two days of the NJEA convention are included, nineteen. The board of education should give consideration to amending the contract language and gradually reducing the number of holidays during the next round of negotiations. Most contracts provide for between twelve and fourteen holidays for 12-month employees.**

**Vacations**

Twelve-month employees receive 10 days vacation through five years and one additional day per additional year to a maximum of 20 days.

**Sick Leave**

Teachers receive 15 days per year. Twelve-month employees receive eighteen days per year and instructional aides and 10-month clerk typists receive ten days per year.

**Recommendation:**

**The current sick leave provision goes well beyond the entitlement granted under N.J.S.A. 18A:30-2. The school district, through the negotiation process, should attempt to reduce the number of sick days granted to employees.**

**Transfer of Sick Time**

New employees may transfer ten days of certified sick time from a previous employer at the beginning of the fourth year and an additional ten days each year thereafter to a maximum of fifty days.

**Compensation for Unused Sick Leave**

Retiring employees are eligible for compensation of \$50 per day to a maximum of \$9,500. Employees must have at least fifteen years of experience and provide notification of intent to retire by June 30<sup>th</sup> of the calendar year prior to the year of retirement.

**The school district is commended for providing an incentive to the staff to conserve their sick time. The incentive provided is reasonable and within the State recommended maximum.**

**Temporary Leaves of Absence**

1. Personal Leave - Up to 3 days with approval of the superintendent.
2. Emergency Personal Leave - One additional day with the approval of the superintendent.
3. Professional Leave - Up to three days with the approval of the superintendent.
4. Association Business Leave - Up to six days per year.
5. Legal Leave - Granted for appearances in any legal proceeding connected with the employee's employment or the school system.
6. Bereavement Leave - Five days leave for death of spouse, child, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, parent, father-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, and any other member of the immediate household. One day for the death of a friend or relative outside the immediate family.
7. Illness in Family Leave - Up to five days per year, per employee, may be granted in the event of illness in the employee's immediate family.

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that the district, through the negotiation process, establish notification deadlines with respect to extended leaves of absence (illness, maternity, etc). This would allow the district to anticipate need and provide for better utilization in the assignment of staff.**

**Sabbatical Leave**

This leave is granted to a maximum of one teacher at any one time. Requests must be submitted by December 1 of the preceeding year. Seven years of prior service is required. An individual can receive 50% of salary for one year or 100% of salary for one-half year. The individual must return to the district for two years or reimburse the district. Medical insurance continues in effect during the leave.

**Health Insurance Benefits**

The Brigantine Board of Education currently offers health insurance to full-time employees and their dependents through the New Jersey State Health Benefits Program (SHBP). They also offer, through separate carriers, a prescription drug plan, dental coverage, and a self-funded optical reimbursement plan. All of the above-described benefits are provided to eligible employees and their dependents at no cost.

In 1998-99, 141 full-time employees participated in the NJ State Health Benefits Plan. Approximately 56% were enrolled in the NJ Plus plan, and 44% in the traditional plan. The actual cost to the district in 1998-99 was \$583,825, which reflects a one-month premium holiday of approximately \$55,000.

The board initially provided a separate prescription drug program with a co-payment of \$5.00/\$5.00 (generic/brand name). The co-payment covered generic as well as brand name drugs (brand name drugs must be specifically named on the physician's prescription order to qualify). Additionally, the plan offered a mail order prescription service for maintenance drugs. The mail service enabled members to purchase up to a 90-day supply of non-emergency and/or maintenance medication, delivered to the door, with no co-payment. The annual premium cost to the district in 1998-99 for the prescription drug plan was \$178,135. However, at the time of the plan renewal during the 1999-00 school year, the carrier notified the board of a significant rate increase of 39.46%, applicable to all co-payment options effective July 1, 2000. The carrier advised that the substantial increase was calculated and based on the districts increased claims utilization, and the industry's increasing rate trend for prescription plans. The cost to the district was an additional \$77,041.

To compensate for the increased cost, and to preclude the need to return to the bargaining unit prior to the end of the contract period, the district's business administrator developed a plan design change as an alternative. The change increased the co-payment from \$5/\$5 to \$5/\$10 (generic/brand name). Along with this change, the district established a fund to reimburse employees the \$5 difference between the new \$10 co-pay and the \$5 co-pay under the original plan. The district did an analysis and found that when compared to the prescription plan offered by the NJ State Benefits Program, and the proposed options offered by the carrier, it could lessen its financial burden and safeguard the structure of the originally negotiated benefit through their alternative plan design. An overall saving of \$66,754 of the added cost was established. The new plan was readily approved and signed into agreement by the Brigantine Board of Education and the Brigantine Education Association. It was implemented through a Memorandum of Understanding to the collective bargaining agreement for the term of July 1, 1999 to June 30,

2002. The district is commended for its resourceful efforts in dealing with a substantial unforeseen expense. However, the actual dollar amount saved cannot be determined until the utilization data is analyzed at the end of the contract period.

There are two levels of dental coverage offered to eligible employees and their dependents. Both plans cover 100% for preventative and diagnostic care, with a \$1,000 and/or \$1,600 maximum per family member per year (depending on the plan of choice). There are no deductibles, and orthodontia is covered at 50%, with lifetime maximums of \$1,000 for both levels. Rates are equitable in each plan design relevant to the cost to the district. The only distinguishing feature between plans is the panel of participating providers. The annual premium cost to the district in 1998-99 was \$99,982.

The optical reimbursement plan is self-funded by the Brigantine Board of Education and managed by the business administrator. Eligible employees and their dependents qualify for reimbursement up to a total maximum of \$300 per contract year, per family. Coverage includes eye examinations, eyeglasses and frames, and contact lenses. In 1998-99, the total cost of reimbursements to the employees was \$22,255.

Brigantine School District retirees with 25 years of service automatically revert to the NJ State Health Benefits Program, which includes a free prescription drug plan. Additionally, as required by federal law, the board offers to employees and their families who are losing coverage under the district's plan, an opportunity to continue with health benefits on a temporary basis through COBRA.

#### **Recommendations:**

**LGBR recommends that future contract negotiations include a 20% employee contribution for other than single healthcare coverage. Although the district utilizes the State Health Benefits Program, the number of employees enrolled in the traditional or indemnity plan, versus NJ Plus, is extremely high and costly. In this district, the expense for the traditional plan alone represents more than half of the total annual premium. An employee contribution for eligible dependent coverage would not only reduce costs, but also encourage prudent choices in selecting family plans.**

**Potential Cost Savings: \$58,729**

**LGBR recommends that future contract negotiations include an employee contribution rate of 50% for private prescription plans for eligible employees and their dependents. This calculation is based on 2000-01 prescription plan rates; it includes the increase of 39.46% as described above. It also reflects the saving realized through the reimbursement plan developed by the district. It is also recommended that future negotiations eliminate the fund that was established to reimburse employees the \$5.00 difference in co-payments resulting from the plan design change.**

**Potential Cost Savings: \$102,813**

**LGBR recommends that future negotiations include an employee contribution rate of 50% for dental coverage for eligible employees and their dependents.**

**Potential Cost Savings: \$49,991**

**LGBR recommends that the district eliminate the added yearly benefit for vision care to further reduce the high cost of employee benefits. This benefit of \$300 per family per year is in addition to costs already partially covered under the health care policy. If utilized at 100%, employee reimbursements associated with the program have the potential to cost the district approximately \$42,300. However, per the business administrator, the average annual costs to the district have been comparable to the 1998-99 expenditure of \$22,255.**

**Potential Cost Savings: \$22,255**

### **Tuition Reimbursement**

1. Reimbursement for up to nine credits based upon the per credit charge of Rowan University, with the prior approval of the superintendent.
2. Costs beyond the Rowan University fee must have the prior approval of the superintendent.
3. Credits applied to the Teacher's Salary Schedule must be in the teacher's field of teaching certification or related fields upon prior approval of the superintendent.

The schedules below represent negotiated salaries for teachers, secretaries/clerk typists, attendance officer/data processor, instructional aides, custodial/maintenance and extracurricular compensation for the 1999-00 school year.

<b>Salary Schedule Teachers 1999-2000</b>				
A	\$34,029	I	\$40,096	<b>Academic Adjustments</b>
B	\$34,329	J	\$41,403	BA + 10..... .75%
C	\$34,829	K	42,721	BA + 20.....1.5%
D	\$35,426	L	\$44,017	BA + 30.....2.25%
E	\$35,748	M	\$45,318	MA.....4.6%
F	\$36,202	N	\$46,476	MA +10.....5.73%
G	\$37,507	O	\$49,650	MA + 20.....6.47%
H	\$38,797	P	\$58,800	MA + 30.....7.22%
				Doctorate.....10%

Longevity Payments: Beginning in the 21<sup>st</sup> year in Brigantine = 4.5%  
Beginning in the 25<sup>th</sup> year in Brigantine = 6.0%  
Beginning in the 30<sup>th</sup> year in Brigantine = 7.5%

**Attendance Officer/Data Processor**  
1999-00 - \$31,684

**Instructional Aides 1999-2000**  
0-5 years - \$13.21 per hour  
6-15 years - \$14.04 per hour  
15+ years - \$17.28 per hour

<b>Salary Schedule Secretaries/Clerk Typist 1999-00</b>			
<b>Level</b>	<b>Secretaries</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Clerk Typist (10- month)*</b>
1	\$25,136	1	\$15,453
2	\$25,436	2	\$15,929
3	\$25,736	3	\$16,250
4	\$26,036	4	\$16,921
5	\$27,606	5	\$17,460
6	\$29,176	6	\$19,224
7	\$30,745	7	\$20,281
8	\$33,390	8	\$23,275

\*\$1,000 added to base salary in 1999-00.

<b>Salary Schedule Custodial/Maintenance Personnel 1999-00*</b>			
<b>Level</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Salary</b>
1	\$18,507	7	\$22,843
2	\$19,903	8	\$24,817
3	\$19,530	9	\$25,643
4	\$20,352	10	\$26,542
5	\$21,185	11	\$27,376
6	\$21,185	12	\$32,869

\*Head Custodian/Maintenance additional compensation 1999-00 = \$1804

<b>Salary Schedule Extracurricular Activities 1999-00*</b>			
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Salary</b>
Chairman of Child Study Team	\$2,126	Intramurals	\$1,241
Coaching Stipend	\$1,774	Disciplinarian	\$5,318
Computer Club	\$1,503	Game Chaperone	\$65.25
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Advisor	\$1,417	Dance Chaperone	\$65.25
Audio-Visual	\$1,374	Concert Chaperone	\$65.25
Activities/Clubs	\$1,241	Night Time Activities Chaperone	\$65.25

\*Student Council Advisor (after school activities not to exceed four per year).

Eighth Grade Advisor (after school activities not to exceed class trip graduation/dance; and a maximum of four additional after school activities).

## **IV. SHARED SERVICES**

Tremendous potential for cost savings and operational efficiencies exist through implementation of shared cooperative services between local government entities. In every review, Local Government Review strives to identify, and quantify, the existing and potential efficiencies available through the collaborative efforts of local officials in service delivery, in an effort to highlight shared services already in place and opportunities for their implementation.

### **Municipal**

The Brigantine City Schools and the City of Brigantine have an excellent working relationship. The city provides the following services to the school district:

- Groundskeeping services - This includes grass cutting, planting services, and snowplowing. It also included the installation of sprinklers on one part of the district's property.
- Maintenance and refueling for the two district vehicles.
- Trash collection as a service (the district reimburses the municipality rather than engaging a private contractor).

The school district provides the following services to the municipality:

- A district custodian is assigned to clean the municipal building.
- The city recreation department uses a classroom for office space. This service includes telephone and electricity.
- The district provides facilities for the recreation and adult education programs and the city sponsored summer camp - Camp Brigantine.

### **Facilities**

The Brigantine Community Education and Recreation Program (CER) offers an extensive and diversified program to the community. The program operates from its office in the school complex on a year round basis. A variety of activities, including courses for adults, courses for children, courses for seniors, trips and recreational activities are available in the fall, winter and spring. School classrooms, computer rooms, gymnasiums and the auditorium are heavily utilized. Camp Brigantine is a youth camp held in the summer for a six-week period at the elementary school. It provides a child-care alternative for parents at a very reasonable rate. The fee structure varies, depending if the child attends for four, five or six weeks and is reduced by between five and seven percent for additional children. It offers professional supervision for children in grades one through six and includes recreational activities, enrichment subjects and field trips.

The use of school facilities is governed by Board Policy (1330) that allows the superintendent the latitude to approve usage for all activities that require no admission fee or when the activity is not used for profit or fund raising. The district requires that proof of insurance be provided to the board secretary/business administrator.

The vast majority of facilities usage is through the recreation department. The extensive program is a fine example of the cooperation that exists between school district and municipal officials.

### **Business**

The school district participates in a number of cooperatives as a way of saving tax dollars. The Atlantic County Joint Insurance Fund (ACJIF) is used for the purchase of insurance (other than health insurance). Electricity and natural gas are purchased through the South Jersey Energy Cooperative. The state contract pricing is utilized for school and office supplies and some janitorial supplies. Janitorial supplies are sometimes purchased through the Atlantic County Cooperative, if the pricing is reasonable. The district bulk purchases its paper through a consortium formed by the Pittsgrove Board of Education and has benefited by reduced prices.

### **Community**

The Brigantine Golf Links, a local golf course, has provided consulting and labor services on landscaping and irrigation to the school district, free of charge. This was particularly evident on one newly planted outside area and the renovations taking place in one interior middle school courtyard.

### **School Districts**

The school district cooperatively sponsors a full day of staff development with the Ventnor and Margate School Districts. The day is funded by Title II Eisenhower monies and provides the three districts with the opportunity to broaden the scope of their professional activities. The district participates in the activities of the Atlantic County Educational Technology Training Center (AC-ETTC) at the Richard Stockton College. Among the many activities are training in the areas of the core curriculum standards, technology and distance learning. Some training is given without charge to the district (1999-00 - \$8,027) and other training through shared, or reduced, cost. The school district also serves as one of the training sites for Stockton's teacher training program.

In addition to savings to be realized by joining services, there are two state programs designed to encourage and reward local government units and their taxpayers for regionalizing, sharing and joining services with other units of local government. The Efficiency Development Incentive Act (REDI) provides funds to local units to study the feasibility of joining services. The second program, REAP (Regional Efficiency Assistance Program), provides direct tax relief for any local government regional service agreement signed after July 1, 1997. These programs are jointly administered by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Division of Local Government Services and the Department of Education (DOE). The school district is encouraged to contact DOE at 609-633-2454 or DCA for additional information or refer to information on the REDI website at: <http://www.state.nj.us/redi>.

**District officials are commended for their efforts in utilizing the shared-services concept in the many areas already identified. They are encouraged to explore every opportunity where shared services may present savings to the school district and the municipality.**



## **V. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY REFORM**

The fifth and final section of the report, Statutory and Regulatory Reform, attempts to identify those areas where existing State regulations or statutory mandates are brought to the attention of the LGBR review team by local officials, which appear to have an adverse effect on efficient and cost effective local operations. It is common for local officials to attribute high costs and increased taxes to “state mandates.” Each review team is then charged with reporting those areas in this section of the report. The findings summarized below will be reviewed by the appropriate state agency, for the purpose of initiating constructive change at the state level.

Board of education members and key administrators were interviewed and given the opportunity to express their concerns regarding the various regulations that impact the public schools. During interviews, district officials expressed some concerns in the following areas:

1. Funding for the World Languages requirement of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards has placed an added financial burden on the district.
2. The funding formula needs to be changed. Present descriptors for Core Curriculum Aid would always provide a zero multiplier for aid to the district.
3. The procedures for determining the residency of incarcerated students and chargebacks to the district should be revisited. The school district expended \$38,442 in 1997-98. This expenditure increased to \$206,682 in 1998-99.
4. Full funding of state mandates.
5. The district feels that its special education programming is efficient and cost-effective, but is still penalized by the special education funding formula.
6. The district is concerned that the requirement for early childhood education will cause a negative financial impact on the district. Presently, there are no provisions to hold a district harmless if they fall below the 20% cutoff.
7. The state assessment tests are too long and need to be shortened.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET REVIEW ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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